

A
MARVEL
MONTHLY

Vol.1 No.5 50p

STARBURST

SCIENCE FANTASY IN TELEVISION, CINEMA AND COMICS

THE FILMING OF
SUPERMAN
-THE MOVIE

PRIZE WINNING
COMPETITION

DARK STAR
-REVIEW PLUS
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SPECIAL PREVIEW



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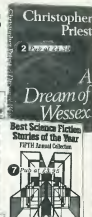
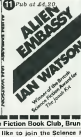
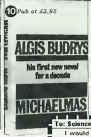
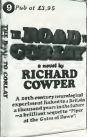
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STARBURST

SCIENCE FANTASY IN TELEVISION, CINEMA AND COMICS

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Welcome to issue 5 of Britain's only media science fiction magazine, this month spotlighting another comic-book creation that has leaped over to the silver screen, **Superman**.

For this special lead feature, we'd like to thank *Films Illustrated* editor, David Castell, for taking time out of his hectic schedule to write such an interesting and informative article.

True to our established style, we'll be featuring special effects expert John Brosnan's look at **Superman — The Movie** next month, as we did with **Star Wars** and **Close Encounters** in previous issues.

Also next month, we'll be reporting on the recent First British Fantasy Film Convention.

Plus, we'll be taking a look at Japan's new sf feature film, **Message from Space**, and presenting the second part of our Doug Trumbull talk-in.

But our big surprise feature, in answer to many questions about **Blake's 7**, **Dr Who** and **The Survivors**, is an interview with writer/creator Terry Nation.

Be here!

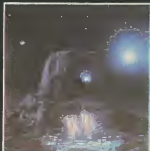
Dez Skinn
 Editor

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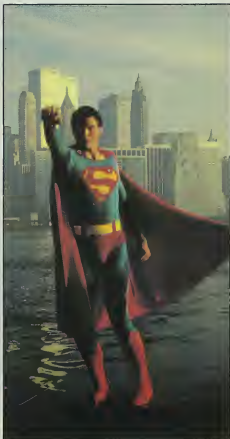
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SUPERMAN

THE MOVIE



With *Superman: The Movie* set for a December 15th London release, David Castell, editor of *Films Illustrated* and former presenter of BBC tv's cinema showcase programme *Film Night*, takes a look at the progress of the movie from the initial concept to the completed film.

In 1933, the fourth year of the Great American Depression. A dreamy teenager named Jerry Siegel wiled away a hot, summer night thinking up a character for a story he was toying with. The next morning he took his idea to a close friend, Joe Shuster, an aspiring cartoonist. Between them they thrashed out the details. Their hero would be "like Samson, Hercules and all the strong men we have ever heard of, all rolled into one," said Siegel. "Only more so," added Shuster. They called him *Superman*.

Forty-five years later, the Man of Steel was being born again, for *Superman: The Movie*. Not so casual this time, for the interim years had built a detailed mythology around Superman. He had become one of the most durable of the American legends, outlasting Betty Grable, outselling the Bible. During World War II, *Superman* was standard issue in GI duffel bags. Goebbels attacked him publicly as being "a Jew-monger". He had been the central figure in *Action Comics*; in a syndicated newspaper strip; in a serialised radio programme from 1940 onwards; in three years of Paramount cartoons from 1941.

The following year, George Lowther presented him in novel form. The *Adventures of Superman* television programme started in America in 1954, more animated cartoons in the '60s and a Broadway musical in 1966. The guy got around.

You might think that the decision to make a major movie would have been a momentous one, taken with cigar-beelching enthusiasm around a Hollywood boardroom table. Wrong. It was in May 1974, in a sidewalk Paris cafe that producer Alexander Salkind turned to his son, Ilya, and family friend, Pierre Spengler, both in their twenties, are asked what they were going to do next. The trio had just had a resounding success with *The Three Musketeers* and were delighted to have its sequel, as well as *The Prince and the Pauper* in the pipeline. "What next? What about *Superman*?" asked Ilya. Alexander had never heard of him, but his son described the incredible feats of the Man of Steel in a way that excited the older man's imagination. "It would have to be big..." he mused, suggesting that he go to his backers and see if the idea tickled their fancy. Indeed it did. They wanted star names, the best special

effects and agreed to a big budget. The sky was the limit. Would \$25,000,000 be enough? Spengler and Salkind Jr swallowed hard. Yes, they said, that would be enough. Wrong again. *Superman: The Movie* ultimately burst its financial banks to the tune of an additional \$40,000,000. The start date was put back and back. And once the cameras rolled, as late as March 1977, the thirty-week schedule stretched to sixty-five.

The gestation period was elephantine. Pierre Spengler negotiated the rights with DC Comics. The Salkinds were unknown to the publishers so all manner of things were written into the contract. Among the clauses was one agreeing that the film would not be a send-up, another that it would not be pornographic (not so bizarre a condition when you think of the fairy tales and children's classics that have lately been revamped into soft-core sex material). Spengler's business nose told him that they were sitting on a veritable goldmine—not a single film, but a *Bond*-like series that could last a decade and hinge on four central characters. They would be Superman himself (and, of course, his earthly



Grinily determined, the Man of Steel (Christopher Reeve) braces himself to bridge a gap in a railway line with his own body.

alias of newspaperman Clark Kent); Lois Lane, the girl reporter who is secretly in love with Superman, but has little time for the gauche Kent; newspaper editor Perry White; and the cub photographer, Jimmy Olsen.

Scripts come before casting, so the Salkinds set out to woo Mario Puzo, then red hot after the success of *The Godfather*. Eager to get away from the connection with violent drama and organised crime, Puzo agreed. Eleven months after the first Paris dinner conversation, they took the idea to the Cannes Film Festival, the great market place of the movie industry. Every hour, on the hour, an airplane circled the bay. Behind it trailed a banner that was to become a legend at Cannes. That year it read: "Superman, Salkind, Puzo". Twelve months to the day, the plane flew again. This time the banner read: "Superman, Salkind, Hamilton". Guy Hamilton was a well-known director who had made a colossal impact with such James Bond films as *Goldfinger*, *Diamonds Are Forever* and *Live and Let Die*. Hamilton wasn't enamoured of Puzo's script. He thought it would make a good novel, but not a great movie. So in came David and Leslie Newman with Robert Benton, the team that had been involved in the Broadway musical *It's a Bird, It's a Plane, It's Superman!* Work got underway at the huge



Cinecitta Studios in Rome. Production designs were approved, sets constructed, costumes assembled. The millions began to pump away like life's blood.

Time enough now, they said, to start worrying about the cast. There was already concern on the part of the money-men (and the film industry moguls who had shown keen enthusiasm at Cannes) over the delays.

After all, many producers had gone away and finished whole films in the time that Superman had taken to find a director. And, where money-men are concerned, stars are insurance policies. There began a bizarre hunt (against Ilya Salkind's better judgment) for a big name to play the Man of Steel. Top athletes and footballers were considered, along with Burt Reynolds, James Caan and Robert Redford. Some were turned down by the Salkinds, some got their "no" in first. Then, by one of those quirks of fate for which the production was overdue, Salkind heard that Marlon Brando was preparing to leave his Pacific hideaway island and come into the market place to earn a little money—well, a few million anyway.

The paunchy, ageing superstar was clearly no Superman, but some swift revisions built up the role of Jor-El, Superman's scientist father from the planet Krypton. For a fee in excess of \$4,000,000 and 11.3 per cent of the eventual profits, Brando could be counted in. Superman could be up, up and away. Twelve days work, but he didn't want to do them in Rome, as there was a suspended prison sentence hanging over him after charges brought there against the controversial *Last Tango in Paris*.

A move abroad (it had to be England and the biggest stage in the world, built



Mishap in the Planet office, Superman, in his secret identity of mild-mannered reporter Clark Kent, runs up the dry-cleaning bills with Daily Planet co-workers Lois Lane (Margot Kidder) and Perry White (Jackie Cooper).



Come fly with me. Superman (Christopher Reeve) and Lois Lane (Margot Kidder) take a spin round the stratosphere.

specifically for *The Spy Who Loved Me*) would ensure Brando, but it would lose Guy Hamilton whose tax position would not allow him to work in Britain for the necessary length of time. Brando won out. Hamilton quit the project, all the Cinecittà work was scrapped and an American director, Richard Donner of *The Omen* fame, took the helm of what was threatening to turn into the *Marie Celeste* of movies.

Casting was now coming together nicely. Gene Hackman was the evil Lex Luthor, Ned Beatty his dim-witted assistant and Valerie Perrine his seductive lady-friend. Glenn Ford and Phyllis Thaxter were to play the couple who adopt the infant Superman when he arrives from Krypton. Terence Stamp, Sarah Douglas and Jack O'Halloran were to play the three villains from Krypton. Canadian actress Margot Kidder had landed the choice role of Lois Lane. Marc McClure was set as Jimmy Olsen, Jackie Cooper as editor Perry White. Still no Superman? Well, some things take time. Only it was now nearly three years since the idea was hatched.

The whole air fare row could well have been triggered by the traffic of hopefuls jetting in and crestfallen rejects flying out. And, yes, it is true that at one point Ilya

Salkind actually screen tested his wife's dentist. The test wasn't too demanding—no leaping over buildings or demolishing dams. The hardest thing asked of the young hopefuls was to jump off a balcony of about four feet, while keeping their hair in place and speaking at the same time. In this department it was Christopher Reeve, a handsome twenty-four-year-old stage actor, who excelled. His only previous screen appearance was a virtual walk-on in Charlton Heston's crippled submarine drama, *Gray Lady Down*. Not that potential star-spotters are likely to recognise him from that role, because the naturally blond six-footer had to dye his hair black for the role of Superman, also to add thirty pounds of solid muscle to his already broad frame in order to achieve the triangular physique of the Man of Steel. Working laboriously in the gym under the tuition of Dave Prowse (*Star Wars'* Darth Vader) he made the physical transformation with time to spare.

Monday 28 March, 1977. 8.30 am. Donner and a hundred-strong British crew made last-minute adjustment to their sets, costumes and Panavision equipment. Brando, wearing a heavy wig and an even heavier black cloak, sat dejectedly in a corner clutching an outside box of Kleenex. He had arrived at London Airport with jet-lag and a heavy cold and made his usual curt announcements to the press. He was not interested in this film, he had said. He was doing it solely to raise money to support and aid the American Indians. The carib, which had trembled in anticipation of his arrival, now moved again. The temperature on the set, even at that early



Joe El (Marlon Brando), father of Superman, sentences three Kryptonian criminals (Terence Stamp, Jack O'Halloran and Sarah Douglas) to imprisonment in the Phantom Zone.



Superman, Earth's mightiest hero, stands vigilant over the Metropolis skyline.

hour, was 105 degrees. Brando, clearly unwell and imprisoned inside a thirty-pound costume, had a ten-minute monologue as his first scene. They got it on the first take, Brando reading his lines off cue cards. Everyone relaxed just a little.

The schedule (planned for seven months) was bisected by eight weeks on location in North America, New York City and Niagara Falls. The British aspect of the production, begun at Shepperton, moved into Pinewood and the massive 007 set on its return from location. The vast stage now housed The Fortress of Solitude, Superman's Arctic hideaway and probably the most spectacular single set in John Barry's production design.

By now Superman was forging ahead; not ahead of schedule (it was already behind), but at least ahead of budget. Plans for an autumn completion and a spring delivery to the distributors had to be abandoned. So, too, did any ideas of a summer 1978 release. On the day the movie was originally scheduled to have opened in cinemas across the country, a group of concerned technicians were still fretting over the niceties of the flying sequences. A decision had to be made—and fast.

Alexander Salkind listened to all the arguments like a seasoned, unflappable professional. Then he went to his backers with the news that made even the gnomes

of Zurich blanch. Superman needed those most costly of cinematic commodities—more time and more money. Even at that point, they could have hurried, cut corners, compromised on quality. But the credo of "Do it big and do it right" which had become the company's watchword, was to

be observed even in this extreme situation. The budget stood in excess of \$65,000,000.

Much of that money had gone into the effects side of the film. There is hardly a set that someone doesn't smash into or crash out of. There is virtually ten times as much trickery as in any of the Bond films, demands that have taxed the patience and the imagination of people like production designer John Barry, make-up wizard Stuart Freeborn and the two men in charge of special effects, Roy Field (opticals) and Colin Chilvers (mechanicals). But what exactly, at the end of the longest day, have they got for their money?

The rights to *Superman* sewn up for all time. A two-hour movie. 80 per cent of *Superman 2*. Options on the four main players (Reeve, Kidder, Cooper and McClure) for further pictures. The possibility of a series that could stretch on for ten or twelve years. Guarantees? No such thing in the film business. The stakes may be the highest ever in world film production but, as Pierre Spengler so rightly says, it's still all down to a roll of the dice.



Superman's arch-nemesis, Lex Luthor, is played by Gene Hackman.



DESCRIBE THIS SPACESHIP!



50 copies of SPACECRAFT: 2000-2100AD to be won

It's competition time once more, following our last contest, *Spot the Spaceship*, back in **Starburst 2**. We've been so bogged under with entries and inundated with pleas for further competitions that we decided to go ahead with a new contest before announcing the results of *Spot the Spaceship*. However, rest assured that the winners will be printed next issue.

This time **Starburst**, in association with Hamlyn Books, are offering no less than fifty copies of the new release, **Spacecraft: 2000 to 2100 AD** to the best fifty entries. **Spacecraft** is an impressive, hardcover book featuring page after colour page of spacecraft paintings by some of the best sf artists in the business. Each spacecraft being accompanied by its own "technical data sheet", by author Stewart Cowley.

All you have to do is to write a similar technical

description of the spacecraft pictured above. Your description must not be more than 300 words.

The entries will be judged by Stewart Cowley, and his decision will be final.

With your description, be sure to enclose the "entry stamp" on this page, and, as a favour to your ever-curious **Starburst** staff, why not also let us know what your three favourite features in this issue are and the one feature you liked least of all.

Send your description, plus entry stamp and your list of favourite/least favourite features in **Starburst 5** along with your name, address and age (block capitals, please) to:

Starburst Competition, Marvel Comics Ltd, Jadwin House, 205-211 Kentish Town Road, London, NW5.

Be sure that your entry is postmarked before **January 31st 1979.**

INGS TO COME.....THING

than science fiction," stresses producer Cubby Broccoli. "What we put on the screen may not correspond with what the real-life space programmes have accomplished, but we will be showing what is within the present capabilities of NASA. We will be putting on the screen what NASA would now be doing in terms of space stations and shuttles, for example, if it had been given the money."

In other words, 007 can afford what NASA can't. Well, nobody does it better. . . .

Busy, Busy Lucas

George Lucas is in the midst of quite frenzied activity. As a producer. While still handling all the multi-million dollar fallout of *Star Wars*, George is now producing three films at once. The list is topped, of course by *Star Wars 2*, directed by Irvin Kershner. Also on the Lucas film schedule: *Purple Haze*, the sequel to *American Graffiti*; and a comedy, set in Paris and written by the Graffiti team, French Postcards.

Bring Out Your Dead

Hollywood's latest top fantasy writer, Michael Crichton (*Westworld*, *Coma*) will direct the movie of his latest book, *Eaters of the Dead*. Can't be any worse than *Armando Crispini's* amazingly gruesome *Autopsy* from Italy, which has cute Mimsy Farmer working in a morgue and having a decidedly unhealthy obsession with corpses. Dead bodies fill her office, her books, her walls, her mind, and the screen from start to finish. Closest thing to a post-mortem of the screen.

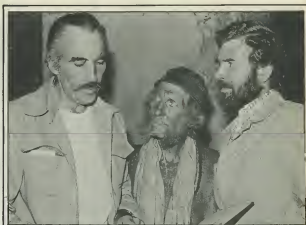
Bring Out Your Money

The Exorcist author William Peter Blatty is suing Warner Brothers for \$40-million. At first, I thought it was because of what they did with *Exorcist II*, but no . . . Thus far, Blatty has received \$15-million from his cut of the first film, and he alleges he's owed more. He wants a better breakdown of the \$14-million he claims Warner charged to advertising expenses.

De Palma Carries On

Brian De Palma has a few surprises up his sleeve . . . His next films are a small, personal movie, made with a New York film school class—and a crooked cop number starring John Travolta. Which means that his big, long-promised feature, *The Demolished Man*, is still languishing in the back of his fertile mind.

"I've been interested in this book for almost fifteen years," he told me. "I would like to do some other things first: *Demolished Man* is a psychic thriller, set in the future, about murder in a telepathic society. It's very complicated, has a lot of telepathy and it's just material that I would like to get away from for awhile. I mean, I do it effectively and I would just like to get in some other areas before I come back to it."



Together Again, Christopher Lee, back in a British studio for the first time in two years, joins his old colleagues, Peter Cushing, in discussions with director Kevin Connor on the set of *Arabian Adventure*, at Pinewood. Cushing plays his first movie role in eleven films as the wicked Enlil Alghazir, rolling on recalcitrant Eastern kleidones with sword and taser. Peter Cushing guests among the Enlil's prisoners. Neither star was too nervous, but so we count this as their 22nd film together.

"Other areas" includes beating his pal Spielberg to the punch in making a personal film, *Home Movies* (while Spielberg has inexplicably called off the production of his kids' film, *After School*). Then, he directs Travolta in *Prince of the City*—after the twinkled-toed star makes American Gigolo for writer-director Paul Schrader, who, of course, scripted De Palma's *Obsession* . . . under its original title of *Deja Vu*.

The good news is that when De Palma feels the time is right to start *Demolished Man*, the film should roll in London. "I've budgeted it for London. I could use the city a little bit, and you have the stages here and the special-effects people. But it's a really hard, big picture to do. And I just don't want to do psychic phenomena for awhile."

Super-Chris

Now It Can Be Told 2 . . . Christopher Lee had to refuse one of the *Superman* leads. He's far too polite to say which one. Everyone else on the film is saying "No Comment". (And: "Hectic. Hectic. Hectic!") Chances are that producers Ilya Salkind and Pierre Spengler wanted Lee, arch-nemesis of their *Three/Four Musketeers* films, to become Lex Luthor himself. Gene Hackman plays the part in the finished (7) films.

Lee had to reject the *Superman* offer because of his tax situation. He's resident now in Los Angeles and is only allowed a certain quota of days inside Britain; just enough time, for

instance, to make the new John Dark/Kevin Connor fantasy trip, *Arabian Adventure*, at Pinewood. He was, of course, very wise in saying no. The *Superman* movie started shooting March 28, 1977, and was still occupying a Pinewood stage when Christopher Lee talked to me exactly 18 months and one day later—a schedule which would have placed him in very deep water with the taxman. Instead of which, while *Superman* lumbered along into two movies, Chris Lee shot around the world and made a dozen other films.

It's more likely that Lee was asked to take the role of the Kryptonian heavy, General Zod, finally played by Terence Stamp. Ironic casting that. Stamp went on to become *Dracula* in the West End flop production of the play which Chris Lee turned down flat for Broadway. On which more anon. . . .

Obituary

Director Bruce Geller and ABC-TV senior executive Steve Gentry were killed when their Cessna crashed into Buena Vista canyon, near Santa Barbara. Gentry, 37, has been responsible for most of the new genre of TV movies, and for developing such spin-offs as *Starsky and Hutch*, *Charlie's Angels* and the upcoming *Battlestar: Galactica*. Bruce Geller, 47, was in TV since the mid-50s, producing the *Rawhide* Western series with a raw unknown called Clint Eastwood. Next, he created the series that unfortunately became all too true in Nixon's White House: *Mission Impossible*. His last movie was *The Savage Bees*.

SS...TO...COME.....THINGS

Lee Stakes Dracula

Now hear this. Christopher Lee has played Dracula for the last time. And that's official. The only deviation from his conviction would be an important director, a script wholly faithful to Bram Stoker, and an enormous fee.

Looking cool—good lord, Christopher Lee in jeans and sneakers!—he is the first English star in decades to have actually benefited from moving to Los Angeles. Not for him the dross Michael Caine and others are sinking their careers in. "A totally new career has opened up," Lee told me at Pinewood studios. "One which actually should have happened years ago. Nobody thinks of me in terms of conventional casting now." He adores the LA weather, life-style, friends, golf, above all, the wide diversity of roles offered him—twelve inside two years. These include his alien in *Starship Invasions*, a demented Disney scientist in *Return To Witch Mountain*, and a pair of clones in *End of the World*... plus the very best fantasy



Christopher Lee in Arabian Adventure.

movie around just now, *The Silent Flute*.

Not horror films, you'll notice. He hasn't quit horror, not that he calls it that; it's just that he hasn't been offered a decent—let alone good—horror script. Since he quit playing Dracula for Hammer, he has counted sixteen other actors tackling the role. And he's not keen on showing them how, anymore. He hasn't seen either of the two Broadway hit vampire plays, having refused the one Frank Langella triumphed in and is now filming with Lord Olivier as Van Helsing.

"I find this extraordinary occupation and fascination with the theme or the character of Dracula quite understandable," says Lee. "It's a very romantic and heroic figure. But it's not being presented the way it should be. I came nearer to it than anyone else, although it was still not right, as I've said on many occasions. So why would I be interested in playing it again."

"Of course, if a man like Zeffirelli asked me to do it, and said it was going to be done word-for-word as Bram Stoker described it, I'd be tempted. But I would still say no. At least, they'd have to pay me so much money, they



Coming next issue: full review of this sci epic from Toei Studios.

wouldn't be able to afford to make the picture!"

How much exactly? "Between one and two million dollars. If people can get that kind of figure for giving performances which are utterly meaningless for pictures which are total failures. I can certainly say I have the right to that figure in something that would be an enormous and colossal success. But it would have to be a great director and an enormous amount of money... because I'm simply not interested."

Femmes Rule, OK?

2147 AD is the setting for director John Hancock's movie of Thomas Berger's book, *Regiment of Women*, which should shake up

Hollywood even more than the rest of the world. Hancock will put a few top macho stars into drag and have them fretting about their panty-hose, hair, make-up, lovers and psychoanalysts. By which, you'll have gathered that the year 2147 has the ladies in charge. It's a femme-dominated society. They wear the suits—"cuts and swear"... and run the world.

Hancock's script, written as always with his actress-wife Dorothy Tristan, zeroes in on a love affair between a female FBI agent and her male secretary, trying to turn things back to an equality situation in the midst of a thriller. Sounds right up Hancock's street. He loves the bizarre—sometimes too much so. Hence, his leaving the *Jaws 2* project and being replaced

GS..TO..COME.....THINGS

by Jeanot Szwarc. Until those headlines, Hancock was best known for *Bang The Drum Slowly*, which brought Robert De Niro to prominence. But he tells us that Jon Voight and Warren Beatty are keenest to go into drag for his new one—apart, that is, from fretting too much already, about what it may do to their careers.

More Dykstra

John Dykstra, the *Star Wars* special effects man, and producer of the tv rapy, *Battlestar Galactica*, is handling all the effects for Columbia's *Altered States*. This is writer Paddy Chayefsky's acid look at the world of science, a logical move for the Oscar-winner, after demolishing television in *Network* and the American medical profession in *Hospital*. Dykstra now helps run a special effects firm called Agee, which includes various of the top Hollywood effects men including the master-mentor of them all, Douglas Trumbull.

Paradise

So it wasn't a joke. A movie is being made of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. And producer Oliver Unger (Force Ten from *Navarone*, etc) insists it's the kind of science fiction that goes "beyond" Lucas and Spielberg. If only we could hear what Milton thinks!

Following the huge world wide success of *Star Wars* and *CE3K*, says Unger, "I decided time was ripe to make a picture of this great subject. When I read John Collier's marvellous screenplay, now published in book form, I realised that I had a script ready for shooting." But no cast, no director just yet. "We plan a world-wide hunt for the perfect Adam and Eve," he adds. Maybe *Starbusts* fit the bill—he needs beautiful unknown, a boy of 18 and a Eurasian girl of 17. But please, write to Oliver Unger, not us.

Cartoon Fever

Animation is back with a bang on the box. Latest character to be revived for home consumption is *Popeye*—from Hanna-Barbera. It's the first new *Popeye* series since 1962. Jack Mercer will continue supplying the voice, which he started back with the old Max Fleischer studio in 1934. *Popeye*, though, had first been born with a stroll-on in a 1931 Betty Boop cartoon from Max (father of director Richard Fleischer). The salty sailor then had his first eleven-minute featurette in 1933. Over the next 25 years, the Fleischer outfit made 234 cartoons; then King Features rushed through a further 220 as the 50s collided into the 60s.

Lots of changes, though, for the new \$90,000 per half-hour shows. *Popeye*'s violence has got to be scotched. It's rumoured he may not even be able to roll up his sleeves. One answer, of course, would be to deprive him of

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his spinnach. *Flash!* *Popeye* looms large as a movie musical. With... Dustin Hoffman!

Cartoon Capers

Good old Snoopy and the rest of the *Peanuts* gang are no longer alone on the screen. As we know (we do, don't we?) with *Supermen*, there is a sudden spurt of interest in transferring comic strip heroes to the movies. Plus a few to television, as well. In short, Hollywood has finally realised there's a huge untapped

market out there. Each year, around 250-million comics are sold in the United States alone—that's one each per man, woman and quite a few of the kids. And that gives the movie-makers the entire 5-15 age group market, with a generous helping of parents, as well.

And so, *Flash Gordon* is being made for \$25-million... Dustin Hoffman will do *Popeye* as a musical with Lily Tomlin as Olive Oyl (after being *The Incredible Shrinking Woman*). Massive Arnold Schwarzenegger will eventually catch up with his pal Lou Ferrigno's fame as the

TO...COME.....THINGS..T

Hulk in the \$15-million adaptation of Conan, The Barbarian. A revamped, definitive Tarzan is afoot in writer Robert Towne's Greystoke. Archie is just around the corner, plus the big-budget musical of Little Orphan Annie. There's also plans for a new film of L'El Abnar, which would have to be great to beat the 1959 version.

And the latest comic-cut-out entrant is Milt Caniff's Terry and the Pirates, being set up now as an \$8-million project in Hong Kong, Macao and the United States, with, like the rest, a major Superman style merchandising boost. Dick Tracy can't be far behind!

British 'toons

Elton John's Capt. Fantastic supraphere is coming to home screens. Thames Television has ordered an animation series based on the Elton album cover some years ago, with designs by Alan Aldridge. Elton may supply Capt. Fantastic's voice.

Japanese 'toons

American producer Sam Frank is running into Space 1999 difficulties in peddling his 85 half-hours of SF cartoons, Battle of the Planets, to US TV. He was hoping to sell them at \$18,000 a show, but had to settle in most local networks for \$11,000. Imbued with a Star Wars feel (don't tell George!) the toons

are edited in Los Angeles, scripted by a former Hanna-Barbera staffer and even vatted for kids by an ex-CBS censor. All the animation, though, was carried out in Japan. Space Cruiser lives . . . Well no wonder he can't sell them!

Cartoon Cuts

The much-touted (overblown, actually), animated version of Ovid's mythological tales, Metamorphoses, has been jerked out of American cinemas—for a retailoring job. The advertising campaign and the publicity was fine. The film was not. The Japanese Sanrio combine says the movie needs a lighter touch, via an American writer and narrator. Surely they could have worked that much out before releasing it. The new version metamorphoses next June.

Lindsay's Movies

Three years after the event, Lindsay Wagner's Canadian movie, Second Wind, is being touted around the world with the sales-pitch: "The Bionic Woman in her first feature". Don't believe one word of it. This Toronto movie made in 1975, immediately before she became Jamie Sommers, was, and remains, her third film.

Reason for the sales hype is quite simple. Nobody buys Lindsay Wagner movies. Why

would we, when she's free on TV. Only her second film, The Paper Chase (1973) was any good, and then not much. Her screen debut, Robert Wise's Two People with Peter Fonda, was such a flop it was not released until two years after it was shot in 1971.

(Incidentally, in both Paper Chase and Second Wind, Lindsey's co-stars included James Naughton, one of the stars from TV's Planet of the Apes.) Just goes to show that people won't even buy one ticket to see two TV favourites. . . .

Welcome Back

The Green Hornet has been seen again . . . Van Williams suddenly popped up as the boss of two indeterminate teenage cops in Quinn Martin's latest all-location police show, Colorado IQ. That's a long way from messing about with Bruce Lee as Kato.

TV Shorts

In a few swatches. . . . The bionic pair and the Hulk's Ken Johnson is setting up a TV movie called The Plants Are Watching—you've been warned . . . William Jordan has quit Jack Webb's staccato Project UFO series; he's replaced by another cardboard cut-out, Edward Winter. . . .

Compiled by Tony Crawley

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METAL MESSIAH

For once, the hype *is* the message. Metal Messiah is "Fog, Flags, Lights, Future Sights, Christ Crucified, Hitler Idolised, Rock'n'Roll Suicide, Tomorrow, Today. The ultimate space rock spectacle of the 1980s..."

It's been slotted in the same unconventional, innovative, fantasy bag as *Jailhouse Rock* (1957), *Privilege* (1969) and *The Man Who Fell To Earth* (1976), spiced with a dash of Alice Cooper's fangs and a few smackers from Kiss.

Writer-producer Stephen P. Zoller, struck with as many bribebats as bouquets, prefers to go one step further. "This is our low-budget answer to what Ken Russell failed to do with Tommy and Brian De Palma failed to do with *Phantom of the Paradise*. We explored our modern society with deliberately naive and schizophrenic eyes and as a result came up with a shocking portrayal that until today has the Ontario censor board up in arms. Quite a paradox when you think about it. I wrote *Metal Messiah* as a warning to the rock generation, and the censors banned it—or probably give it an X-rating so the kids won't be able to see it."

Over to Zoller's partner, director Tibor Takacs. "We just elaborated on current themes, trying to make people realise what could happen in a rock concert atmosphere if unsavoury forces were to manipulate it. Now, it's all a game to groups like Kiss. I'm sure they don't realise the effect they have on the kids in the audience."

A rock culture version of the age-old confrontation between reality and fantasy, therefore, sowed the mercurial seeds for *Metal Messiah*. A stage project first in 1976, until locked out of the theatre due to its controversial—you know, 'shocking'!—subject matter, and now an astonishing 80-minute feature film, the like of which has never been perpetrated on any screen before. And that's a promise.

We've all experienced the reality that forced this heady film into being. I mused about it a dozen years or more ago while deaf for a whole day after one of the earliest examples of Beatlemania in staid old Bourne-mouth, of all places, and again while succumbing to Melina Mercouri, of all non-singers, as she literally seduced a crowd of 8,000 or more in Stockholm's Grooa Lund amusement park. The audience was Swedish, she sang in Greek, but after three numbers we would have followed her to the ramparts anywhere. Stones and Dylan audiences know it, feel it every time. The



sheer Nuremberg Rally-like power of a rock or pop, or even the last night of the Proms show.

For Stephen Zoller it was a heavy metal rock concert. "There was a kid of about fourteen on my right with a bottle of Scotch in his hand. The kid on my left was snorting cocaine. They were both yelling *Kill! Kill! Kill!* while extending their right arms in a Nazi salute. I began to think that it wouldn't take much to mobilise or influence these kids. They obviously have a lot of pent-up frustrations, and who can blame them? We live in a very difficult, highly technological and spiritless age.

"I really started to wonder what would happen if a guy like Hitler decided to make the rounds today. He influenced a lot of people through theatrical techniques. He would have made a great rock star..."

Rock 'n' fascism, then. In *Anywhere City*, anytime. Yesterday, today, tomorrow, now or never. Wherein is the Metal Messiah, a Silver Surfer *sans* board; silvery and "deliberately anonymous", says Zoller. A stranger in a stranger land, overlooking society's ills and utter degradation: the businessmen selling air and water, the radiation mutations, the zombie-like students of Anywhere University with their

android headmaster (spouting forth from a tape reel of Marine orders). And he tries to warn them all, via mental telepathy, that their city, their planet is dying, the oceans support life no more, and the citizens must abandon their hedonism once and for all.

No one listens. No one cares. Except Violet, the priestess of the Children of Truth; she sees him as the new messiah and drug-programmes him into a rock evangelist. All except the movie's major antagonist, Max the Promoter; he wants the stranger wasted. The chosen executioner is one Philip Chandler, a re-tread of the private eye of the 40s; he has doubts about it, but accepts the assignment to hit "the man who looks like he belongs in a grade B sci-fi flick".

Hunted by Chandler, fleeing the crazed Violet, the stranger is in the midst of a bad trip—an amazing battery of vertigo sights and sounds—when he finally meets and attempts a philosophical battle with Max. He's in no shape to win; but then no one is. Max is the devil incarnate. Max insists the people like things the way they are, so quit messing around, join me . . . and using his cosmic forces, he entices the stranger into a trap of twisted truths.

And so he relents. He becomes the Metal Messiah. The ultimate rock star.

And so to the climax, the dazzling spectacle finale of the movie. Max's rock spectacular, with the new Messiah as a mere puppet dangling from the promoter's strings. The setting is a stadium. It could be Ancient Rome with all the dancing girls, the fog, lights, the sirens, confetti, the screaming and the animal carcasses lying about the place.

The Metal Messiah is on stage, befuddled, hypnotized like his audience, by the drone of his robotoid band, singing about the destruction of the planet. The crowd love it. The noise is deafening. The tension rises . . . rises. They want more, much more. . . Max gives it to them. He has one of the girls murdered on stage.

The crowd go mad all over again. The sheer trauma of it all finally breaks through the stranger and shatters the nightmare. "Stop this insanity," he pleads. Too late. No one is listening any more. The spectacle has taken them over. Max has won. And he offers the Metal Messiah to them for "the ultimate act of the ultimate spectacle". Crucifixion.

Fade out. And fade, surrealistically in. . . . Anywhere City has gone. Vanished. Across the screen's horizon is a field of barren ash. And the Metal Messiah. Hung upon a cross. Alone.

Although made for comparative peanuts, Zoller-Takacs' *alms* is a devastating amalgam of the history of movies. There is the 1930s German cinema as exemplified in the Messiah him(it)self, reminiscent of *Metro-polis*; there are, too, the images of the 1940s detective movies, the 1950s B-films; the pop revolution fare of the 60s—tied up with a '70s approach to speed and style, vistas

and vibrations. An intense, demanding experience; everything and everything as, opposed to the more usual case of everything and nothing.



"I want to point out," Stephen Zoller tells us, "that the film is not a high budget production . . . no commercially slick venture. We had a low shooting ratio and limiting funding. But I think we came through with a unique and innovative style. It is violent. It has scenes of frenzied activity. It is a complex film born out of a complex age."

"It may be called an anti-film for its surrealistic account of the effects of rock 'n' roll on our society. This demanded the use of a new film language (void of pure commercialism) that communicates with those who are young and paranoid and have to put with our modern world."

And not for the last time. Stephen and Tibor are currently working on a news film, *The Tomorrow Man*. "We hope it will re-define the meaning of nuclear holocaust to a lot of people."

Footnote: Despite its ban in Canada, *Metal Messiah* should be found on release in France and Germany shortly. "But I'm not sure," says Zoller, "if any British distributor will come around." We hope to prove him wrong.

Metal Messiah (1978)

John Paul Young (as Max), Richard Allen (Philip Chandler), David Heisen (The Messiah).

Directed and edited by Tibor Takacs, written and produced by Stephen Zoller, executive producer, Dean Jean Louis, photographed by J. L. Sutherland, music (live on film) by David Jensen, Craig Baxter, Paul Jessup, Music (recorded) by Damsa and Clement, sound by Peter Chapman.

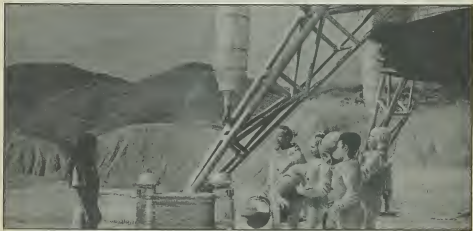
An MM Productions (Toronto) film, world sales, Stephen Zoller, MM Productions, 271, Queen Street East, Toronto, Ontario, M5A 1S6.

Time: 76 mins

No British Distributor

STAR DUST

or: In The Dust of the Stars



Review by Tony Crawley

As we're becoming increasingly aware, everyone's getting into the space movie race. We've already seen Italy's *Star Pilot* (see *Things to Come* last issue), and Japan's *Space Cruiser* (see *Starburst 2*)... but East Germany? Now that is a surprise!

Well, not really. It's becoming quite the norm for director Dr Gottfried Kolditz, a former *musikalischer*, or music consultant, on the opera films made at the DEFA Studios in East Berlin. He first turned to science fiction (a logical progression, perhaps, from his later fairy tale movies) with *Signale—ein Weltraumabenteuer* (*Signals—An Adventure in Space*) just the other year.

His latest endeavour, *Im Staub der Sterne* (*In The Dust of the Stars*), is also greatly concerned with problems of the future. This new title has also been shortened by his interpreters to *Star Dust*, which to us, seems too close to George Lucas, or even David Essex. However, there is a certain feeling of *Star Trek* to the whole... or... enterprise. Except, Capt. Kirk is a woman... a very fetching blonde at that.

Dr Kolditz sets no particular era for his new adventure. Beyond 2001, let's say. Then



again, one would expect the Iron Curtain countries to have a female space-commander much earlier than that, or indeed, long before the Americans and their much-scaled down NASA programme.

The film—quite a good old thriller—begins with an appeal for help picked up by the cruising spaceship *Cynro 19/4* from the planet TEM 4. Yet all is not quite what it appears... First, the *Cynro's* crew is barely able to prevent the craft from crashing. Second, the *Temers* are over-friendly, inviting the crew to a midnight party... and as for their SOS, well, that was a bit of a mistake, don't you know.

Not so.

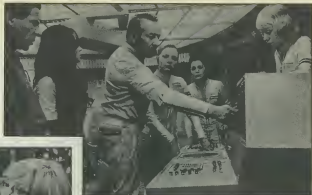
One of the *Cynro* crew wanders off and discovers a mine, where the original inhabitants of the planet are toiling; slaves under the *Temers'* iron rule. The *Turis*, they're called. Several generations previously, they had been attacked and taken over by the *Temers*. It was the *Turis* who had sent out the Mayday call.

Soon enough, shots are ringing out in the low, narrow passages of the mine. The *Temers'* tempers are up. They want to

prevent contact between the Cynro crew and the Turis at all costs. (Sound familiar any of this, bearing in mind East European politics?)

Our lovely blonde space commander has to make the big decision. Take sides—or take-off? There's not much time either way. The Temers are attempting to flood the land-field area... the Turis finally revolt in open force... and then the Temers decide to blow up the spaceship...

Cynro 19/4 makes it in the proverbial nick of time. But our blonde and her navigator are not aboard... Tune in again next week to another thrilling instalment of...



Well, yes, it is a bit like that at times. Cliff-hanger excitement, an sf *Perils of Pauline*-cum-*Spartacus*, played in deadly earnest, with straight, set faces, spectacular scenery and effects, and, with a little help from Russia and Czechoslovakia. What DEFA like to call an international cast.

All the sf gimmickry aside, a major plus for the movie is that the outer-space blonde is played by Jana Brejchova, first introduced to a captivated world by Milos (Cuckoo's Nest) Forman in his marvellous Czech movie, *A Blonde In Love* (1965). The major minus is that her character is called Akala, not that far distant from your friendly neighbourhood cub-scout mistress.



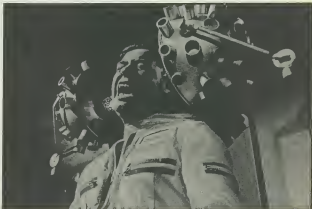
Star Dust (Im Staub der Sterne, 1978)

Jana Brejchova (as Akala), Alfred Struwe (Suko, navigator), Ekkhard Schall (Chief), Milan Bel (Rink), Sylvia Popovici (Illic), Violeta Andrej (Rali), Leon Niemczyk (Thob), Regine Heintze (My), Stefan Mihailescu Braila (Xik), Mihai Merenta (Kie), Aurelia Dumitrescu (Chia).

Written and Directed by Dr Gottfried Kolditz, Photographed by Peter Saring, Music by Karl-Ernst Sasse, Costumes by Katrin Johnson, Set Designer Bernhard Kalisch, Edited by Christa Helwig.

A DEFA-Aussenhandel (East Germany) Production.

No British Distributor



LUCAS AND SPIELBERG

Beyond STAR WARS and E.T.

Report by Tony Crawley

For two monster hit film-makers, neither far distant from the Francis Coppola brood of independence, there's scant surprise in the way that George Lucas and Steven Spielberg are investing their hefty slices of the world's top two movies.

They've both announced their future schedules. And, indirectly, they're taking over Hollywood. "I know what George is doing for the next four years," says Spielberg. "He knows what I'm doing for the next four years. We all know what the next four years will be like, if our films are successful. We can predict trends... we can start trends."

"Like George, I'm interested in doing some small movies, which are unique and experimental and very personal. While I'm doing that, Brian De Palma will go out and make a big, trashy epic, that we'll all love. Theo, he'll resent his own success and he'll go out and make a small movie, and then I'll go back and make a trashy epic. Hopefully, we'll be able to leapfrog and make some good movies in between."

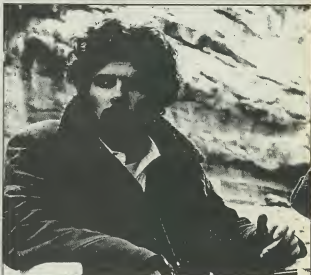
"The one thing about this generation is that we all came out of the 60s, everybody has a real healthy conscience. Even though a lot of our films are going to appeal to the masses, they're going to have something to them that's really more than cotton candy."

Such as...?

George Lucas

Lucas is on 40% of Star Wars—the film and the merchandising. In folding stuff, that works out around \$80,000,000. More than Gone With The Wind ever earned in the North America! I remember way back when Albert Finney became a dollar-millionaire from his share of the Tom Jones film. But eighty-million... that's too staggering to comprehend.

Like the pools winners, it's not changing George's lifestyle that much. Oh, he's furnished his San Fernando Valley home at



last, and his Oscar-winning editor-wife, Marcia, has all the latest cinequipment installed. Otherwise, George can still be seen much as he was five years ago—in levis and sneakers behind the wheel of his '67 Camaro. And he's still working, of course. "A free mao". He calls the shots today.

He's set up four new combines over and beyond his original Lucas film company. His Star Wars Corporation will make Star Wars II (directed by Ralston Ellis) Irwin Kershner) and a total of up to two sequels. George will direct the last one only, "about 20 years from now". Medway Productions will make the smaller, more

experimental type of movie George is more addicted to; this could lead to a resurrection of his Radioland Murders project. Sprocket Systems Inc. will produce special effects for the new SW and any other movie hiring its services. Black Falcon Ltd. will tend the merchandising spin-offs of all his films.

Medway's first job is re-issuing George's first hit, American Graffiti, which has to date earned in excess of \$95,000,000 worldwide. The film featured a couple of unknowns called Richard Dreyfuss and Harrison Ford; it also led to Paramount-TV's Happy Days series, also headlined by actor Ron Howard. This time, though, Lucas

promises us the entire film—with the five minutes Universal trimmed out put back in by Marcia. "It was a film made by me, with changes by the studio," says George. "That isn't fair."

Next, Medway will make the inevitable sequel film. More *American Graffiti*, produced by George and re-uniting most of the original team: Ron Howard, Paul Le Mat, Coby Williams, Charlie Martin Smith and Coady Clark (who later graduated into Nic Roeg's *The Man Who Fell To Earth*).

Steven Spielberg

Spielberg is also into production and quicker than George, producing one movie and directing another.

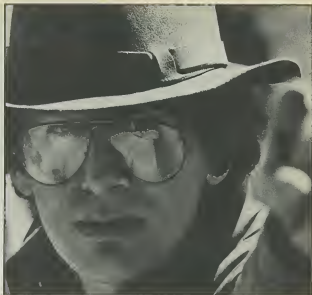
First off-shoot of his new fame is Universal's \$2,000,000 Beatlemania tribute, *I Wanna Hold Your Hand*, with a bunch of newcomers on all sides of the camera. Next, 1941 (ex-*The Rising Sun*), a \$12,000,000 comedy about Los Angeles going bananas, fearing a Japanese attack within days of Pearl Harbour (actually, it sounded more like a re-run of Norman Jewison's *The Russians Are Coming*).

"It's much more like the Orson Welles broadcast, *The War of the Worlds*," says Spielberg. "Except it really happened in Los Angeles. Everyone lost their minds, spent every last bullet shooting clouds for eight hours straight. People were hiding in basements they didn't have—they had to dig their basements. I've taken this pillar of truth and I've shredded it into a *Helzapoppin'* type movie that is visually madcap and quite nuts!"

Steve directs (from pal John Mills' script) in September, if all goes well. He wanted John Wayne for the lead. The Duke wasn't pleased with true facts of the tale—Japs shot down two USAF planes. That just doesn't happen in Wayne wars.

Now, Steven has added a second project to his director's schedule—a quickie from the Beatle film writers, Robert Zemeckis and Bob Gale: *After School (ex-Growing Up)*. This is an extremely modern 28-day shoot, costing \$1,500,000—about enough for the CE3K crew's lunch. It's a view of adolescence set in Spielberg's old home town of Phoenix, Arizona. "It's about suburban children in America, gangs of kids, what happens to them between 3pm, when they get out of school and 6pm when they get home for supper. They're really young adults, becoming street smart, making love at 11, discovering drugs at 10. A lot of it will deal greatly with the influence of TV on children today. How they lived out the fantasies of *Charlie's Angels*, how that becomes the most important thing in those after school hours."

All of which makes this one sound much influenced by his pal Francis Truffaut's marvellous little French movie, *L'argent de poche/Small Change*. "That's right," agrees Spielberg. "He nagged me to make this movie." His cast will be aged between eight and 14, and probably include five-



year old Cary Guffey, the CE3K smiler.

Then, of course, comes CE3K II. Or is that CE4K? Spielberg's not saying. He's also denying that it will be about Dreyfuss up there on the Mother Ship and/or the planets. "There are so many close encounter stories left on Earth," he says, rather guardedly.

But didn't he also once say sequels reduced the art of movies to just a science? Yes he did; but three years ago "Doing a sequel," he even added, "is really like operating a slot machine, knowing you're going to get three cherries everytime."

At the National Film Theatre in London, he countered this by declaring, "I approve of the sequels I want to make! Sequels are all right if you make *Godfather II*. Sequels are not okay if you make *Airport 77*... Universal will probably exploit *Jaws* like that with a new *Jaws* every two years until they stop making money. I hope that's soon."

Francis Ford Coppola

Coppola—they both lead back to him. Spielberg out of enormous respect, Lucas due to an even closer relationship. After his first major Hollywood success, *You're A Big Boy Now* (1967), Francis Ford Coppola (he's lately dropped the Ford) took the mere \$350,000 he'd earned at Warners and set up American Zoetrope in his home base of San Francisco and began his fight with the movie-establishment. The first Zoetrope film was THX 1138, directed by his outfit's executive vice-president, 25-year-old George Lucas.

Zoetrope failed, just like the fairly like-minded Apple Corps of the Beatles. Coppola and Zoetrope both went into the deep-freeze until *The Godfather* shot him back into the hot seat. Straightaway he continued backing Lucas—with *American Graffiti*. Coppola's fine personal "little" film, *The Conversation* (Gene Hackman, Harrison Ford) stemmed from Zoetrope, so does his much-awaited Vietnam war apologia, *Apocalypse Now*.

Lucas was originally set to direct this war-movie, from yet another John Mills script. (Harrison Ford is in the film—as Col. Lucas). George got into *Star Wars* and Coppola directed instead, with a lot of help from George. When running short of his \$30,000,000 budget, George told Francis to dip into the *Star Wars* cash, since when George has been helping to edit the film—for free. Coppola once said, "If I die let George finish the film. He knows more about it than I do."

This time around, the *wunderkind* directors' battle against the Hollywood hierarchy should work. Lucas and Spielberg are operating from enormous strength; Coppola is now backing one of their West German new-wave opposites, Wim Wenders in his first American venture, *Hammett*. The trio appreciate the camaraderie between like-minded cine-spirits and are fighting for freedom for all.

"We're trying," says George, "to make a company that will respect the personality and individuality of film-makers."

To do that takes clout. They've got it. The Force is with them both.

DARK STAR

Review

THE time is the mid-21st century and the film is *Dark Star*, the story of four astronauts who are (according to the publicity) *Bombed Out in Space with a Spaced-out Bomb*. The scoutship *Dark Star*'s mission is to find unstable planets and destroy them with thermostellar bombs, so that the galaxy will be safe for future colonists.

According to production designer/editor/special effects man/co-scripter/star Dan O'Bannon, the original, unfilmed ending featured a bomb which got stuck in the bomb-bay and could not be dropped. . . . "So the captain goes outside with a crowbar to try to lever it out of the bomb-bay. One of the other men goes crazy and comes outside with a raygun and threatens to blast it. He fires it, the bomb blows up, the two men are tossed away into space and one of them becomes a shooting star as he goes into the Earth's atmosphere and burns up. The ending was copied from Ray Bradbury's story *Kaleidoscope*." The ending of the finished film is even more outlandish.

Review by John Fleming

O'Bannon and producer/director John Carpenter made the movie over a 3½ year period on a miniscule budget. The result is *Star Trek* with jokes, peopled with drugged hippies: a sort of M*A*S*H in outer space. It even has an equivalent to M*A*S*H loudspeaker announcements, in the form of the spaceship's female-voiced computer.

The four-man crew have been in space 20 years but (thanks to Einstein's Theory) have only aged 3 years. This gives them a slender grip on reality, especially when you consider the 10-year delay in messages from Earth. A few years ago the ship's captain, Commander Powell, was killed by a short-circuit in his chair, an asteroid storm destroyed the ship's automatic defences and there was a radiation leak. New radiation shields cannot be sent from Earth because of a Congressional cut-back. Worse still, an accident has destroyed the ship's entire supply of toilet paper. In other words, things are not going too well.

Astronaut Pinback (O'Bannon) is worried because his seat is near the one which killed Commander Powell. Astronaut Doolittle is crazy with frustration: "Don't give me any of that Intelligent Life stuff—Give me some planet I can blow up." Astronaut Talby spends all his time in a bubble dome at the top of the ship, gazing at the stars, trying to forget about Commander Powell. And Boiler just tries to do his job. The ship is not the same since Commander Powell died.

Director John Carpenter says the film was originally conceived as a *Waiting For Godot* in outer space: "We used this concept of having the men constantly referring to Powell and giving the audience the idea that this man was somehow the reason behind their mission, a guiding force."

As it is, the astronauts are at the mercy of random events. The female computer tells them slowly, gently, almost apologetically, that an asteroid storm is approaching. Like the one two years ago in which all the computer defences were

Below: Astronauts Doolittle (Brian Narelle), Boiler (Cal Kantho(m)), and Pinback (Dan O'Bannon) during routine operations on board the spaceship.



Opposite top: On duty. The crew at the controls of the *Dark Star*.
Opposite below: Doolittle (Brian Narelle) "surfs" towards oblivion on a piece of wreckage.



destroyed. Oh, by the way, they have 35 seconds to set up the defences manually. *Chaos! Panic! Bedlam!*

As the men work feverishly, a laser area is hit and Bomb number 20 is activated. The doors of the bomb-bay open. The bombs have computer minds of their own—and can talk. The ship's computer tells Bomb 20 to return to its bay. The bomb

replies quietly that it has been told to detonate. The ship's computer goes into emergency over-ride; the bomb grudgingly de-activates itself and returns. The crew are not told what has happened in detail: all they know is that the storm has caused an unidentified malfunction. No-one realises the serious consequences.

The idea of a talking bomb was Dan

O'Bannon's. It was not based on HAL in 2001 but was an idea O'Bannon had nurtured since adolescence. He also suggested the idea of a dead Commander Powell and a final confrontation between astronaut and bomb. John Carpenter put these ideas into a rough script called *The Electric Dutchman* (a sort of psychedelic *Flying Dutchman*). The title was later



STARBURST
mini-poster

CYROGENIC FREEZER.

DARK STAR^A

bombed out in space
with a spaced out bomb!



BRILLIANTLY CLEVER (AND FUNNY) SCIENCE-FICTION TALE, DARK STAR BOASTS A SUPERBLY WRITTEN SCRIPT, SOME IMPRESSIVE SPECIAL EFFECTS AND THE KIND OF IMAGINATION THAT MAKES EVEN 'STAR WARS' LOOK CLICHÉD. SHEER INTERSTELLAR DELIGHT. PHILIP JENKINSON

An OPPIDAN ENTERTAINMENTS Release of a JACK H. HARRIS Production Starring DAN O'BANNON and BRIAN NARELLE Produced & directed by JOHN CARPENTER

changed to *The Cosmic Dutchman*, then *Night of the Cold Sun*, *Planet Fall*, the *Planet Smashers* and, finally, *The Centaur*. It was not until well into production that both ship and film became *Dark Star*.

O'Bannon met Carpenter at the University of Southern California (USC). Carpenter had been only eight years old when he saw *Forbidden Planet*. This spurred him on to make "hideous 8mm movies about paper-



maché monsters" and to publish a fan/movie monster magazine called *Fantastic Films Illustrated* for a few years before going to USC. O'Bannon had been educated in fine arts (painting and illustration) and only went to USC after reading about it in *Playboy*. He had already made a one-hour parody of monster films called *The Attack of the 50 Foot Chicken*.

There is no monster in *Dark Star*, but there is one alien—the ship's pet—a cross between a large red beachball and a three-foot high tomato with two little claw-feet at the bottom. Part of the original idea was that the crew's mission included a search for intelligent life. There was to have been a specimen room in the ship: a "psychedelic zoo" with hundreds of bizarre creatures

(rather like those which appeared later in the *Star Wars* canteen). But the cost was too high and the idea was cut back to the one "beachball with claws".

When Pinback tries to feed this alien it bounces up, leaps on him, and escapes into a corridor. Pinback tries to tempt it with a toy mouse, its favourite plaything, but the super-tomato leaps on the fake rodent and eats it. The chase continues along dull corridors and through darkened rooms. Pinback chases his pet into a closet. A light switches itself on. It isn't a closet! Pinback is standing on a narrow ledge in an apparently bottomless lift-shaft with the alien bouncing on his back. He falls and grasps the ledge with his fingers. The alien again bounces onto his back and two little



claws start tickling the astronaut towards fatal laughter. The lift starts to descend until it is about to crush Pinback. The alien bounces off and finds the faulty laser unit which was damaged in the asteroid storm.

Accidentally, the comic super-tomato short-circuits the device and Bomb 20 is again activated. The ship's computer and bomb again argue out the mistake in a civilized manner. The computer patiently explains there is an unknown malfunction and gently asks the bomb to de-activate itself and return to the bay. The bomb is getting a little bored with all this malfunctioning and inefficiency. Meanwhile, Pinback is still hanging from the bottom of the lift and screaming.

The 80 ft lift-shaft was built horizontally for shooting. The 'look' of the film was Dan O'Bannon's responsibility. He made the sets and props himself and arranged the special effects. It took him about a week to erect a frame for the control room, then another week of 20 hour days to assemble everything. "By the time it was finished and we got everything ready to roll, I was in complete mental and physical exhaustion." But he was so successful that he was later chosen to design the computer animation and graphic displays for *Star Wars*. He says: "I regard motion pictures primarily as an art form and secondarily as employment."

Dark Star was never intended for commercial release. The original version was made, according to O'Bannon, "to impress everyone." He told *Cinefantastique* at the time: "It's a showcase." There are no plans now to distribute the film commercially. Carpenter and O'Bannon wanted to show that they could make this type of film, give enough money. As it was, conditions were primitive: "Our caneras would rattle and purr like cocktail-shakers full of glass," says Carpenter. "The Coke bottles rammed on the front of the camera were posing as lenses. They wouldn't focus." They built 16 sets in their own homes and in a boiler-room. Sometimes they even managed to use a real sound stage.

After six months, the film was only 25% completed and the money had run out. A year later, with more money and a largely new crew, production resumed. The actors were given haircuts, wigs and false beards to match their former appearances. Prices had risen. Pressure mounted. In three weeks of intensive shooting, often 14 hours a day, more live action footage was completed. But the money ran out again. They had now spent \$3000-\$6000 of their own money and had produced a 40 minute rough-out.

They screened the film to executives from the professional film industry without success. Then they were lucky. It was seen

Opposite top: A strange colour shot of the *Dark Star* control room. *Opposite centre:* The cover of the Alan Dean Foster novellisation of the film. *Opposite below:* Astronaut Talby (Dre Polich) spends most of his time away from the crew gazing at the stars,

by veteran producer Jack H. Harris, who had made his reputation by financing cheap science fiction films: *The Blob*, *Dinosaur*, *4-D Man*, *Equinox* etc. He agreed to provide finance and distribution for a 35mm feature version. After a three-month study, it was decided to re-shoot scenes and re-edit sequences as well as shooting additional scenes. Yet another crew was assembled, more sets built, tempers became short and egos wore thin. But live-action filming was finally completed; and, after a further 13 months, special effects work was completed. The eventual cost was a low \$60,000.

Dark Star does look cheap (though not that cheap). But the low-key, throw-away acting style helps to cover over the cracks. O'Bannon had a certain amount of theatre experience before he enrolled at USC and Carpenter says he wanted the performers to underplay "to give a sense of realism." This jelled with O'Bannon's own feeling that the movie should have "an aura of super-realism, in which it looks utterly real, but better." The result is a very enjoyable up-market B-feature. Carpenter had already



Cal Kuniholm as Astronaut Boiler.

made 11 student films at USC and had worked on an Oscar-winning short *The Resurrection of Broncho Billy*. His experience in student film-making had allowed him to work any excesses out of his system and his unfussy direction on *Dark Star* was influenced by veteran cult figure Howard Hawks. "From the beginning," says Carpenter, "I wanted the picture to have a certain look: something best described as RKO Radio Pictures circa 1950."

Dark Star is episodic, laconic, full of diversions and asides because Carpenter wanted the emphasis to be "not so much on getting from A to B but what it's like getting there". Thus the anarchic structure and the long interlude with Pinback struggling to get out of the lift-shaft as if he were in some demented Laurel and Hardy film: swinging in mid-air, getting stuck in the hatch, a metal plate falling on his head, explosive bolts detonating around him. Eventually he emerges, triumphant but messy, and shoots the alien with a tranquilizer gun. Unfortunately, the alien is filled with gas and, when shot, zooms

round the room like a punctured balloon, making a rude noise.

Sound effects on the movie are rather eccentric. For a sliding door, a combination of sounds was used: an automatic hospital bed being raised and lowered, plus the opening of a squeaky door on a stove. When the ship goes into 'hyper-drive', the sound-effect is of a 747 jet taking off, but played 20% slower than normal. It is hyperdrive (like Warp Factor speeds in *Star Trek*) which allows the ship to travel so far so fast.

The *Dark Star* is now entering a new star system.

The crew are gradually falling apart. Paranoia and self-pity are rife. They can't remember each other's names, or even their own names. Pinback reveals that he isn't really Pinback anyway. He is Bill Fruge, a technician who just happened to put on Pinback's space suit after the astronaut had gone insane and jumped into a vat of liquid fuel. Meanwhile, Talby sits up in the bubble dome watching the stars and thinking of the Phoenix Asteroids: "They just glow as they drift around the Universe," he says vaguely. The perfect life. Aimless and effortless.

To show Talby sitting isolated in his dome, O'Bannon used what he calls "the foreground model shot". He built a bubble measuring about one foot across and shot through it, with Talby in the background. This technique of miniature models in the foreground and actors in the background was used in several scenes to avoid the expense of full-scale sets.

The model spaceship itself was designed by Ron Cobb, a satirical cartoonist on the underground paper *Los Angeles Free Press*. The 3 ft long model was made in fibreglass by Greg Jein, who also built several puppets of spacemen (for use in long-shot) with Harry Walt. In addition, a 6 ft long model of the ship's underside was built, with a 1½ ft bomb hanging from it. The bomb was originally intended to be cylindrical. But O'Bannon could find no cylindrical components. So he bought two model kits. A truck kit gave him the basic oblong, boxcar shape of the bomb; a Mazda sports car kit gave him plenty of chrome for detailing.

The climax of the film features a variation on the original idea of a bomb jamming in its bay, but with the addition of a discussion about Cartesian philosophy (mostly written by O'Bannon), a chat with the dead Commander Powell, delusions of divinity and an inspired 'borrowing' from a *Marvel Comics* super-hero *The Silver Surfer*. *Dark Star* is well worth 83 minutes of anyone's time: perhaps the most enjoyable piece of anarchy since the Marx Brothers. Director John Carpenter should succeed in the business. He has a healthy and realistic view of film-making: "My dealings with studios and producers leave me with a sense of the random structure of the universe".

In this, the second part, of our epic feature on the classic humorous sci-fi movie *Dark Star*, *Starburst* regular Tony Crawley talks to writer-composer-producer-director John Carpenter about the amazing eight-year history behind the film.

DARK STAR

Interview

Mission Control to Dark Star: Hi guys! Glad we got your message. You'll be interested to hear it was broadcast live all over earth. In prime time. Got good reviews in the trades . . . The time lag on these messages is getting longer. We gather from the ten-year delay that you are approximately 18 parsecs away. Drop us a line more often, okay?

. . . Sorry to hear about the radiation leak on the ship. And real sorry to hear about the death of Commander Powell. There was a week of mourning here on Earth. Flags were at half-mast. We're all behind you guys . . .

About your request for radiation shielding: sorry to report this request has been denied. I hate to send bad news when you

guys are up there doing such a swell job. But I think you'll take it in the proper spirit. There's been some cut-backs in Congress and right now, considering the distance we just can't afford to send a cargo shuttle out there to you. But I know you guys will make do

. . . Keep up the good work, men!

SO begins, for me at least, the dafiest, wittiest, funniest movie I've seen for years; Woody Allen notwithstanding. John Carpenter's *Dark Star*, a cheapie cult movie fast turning into a classic. A slice of absurdist comedy in outer space. Four years in the making. Eight years in making the trip to Europe, including a British release by Oppidan Entertainments after a Christmas '77 transmission on BBC-2. (See John Flemming's review elsewhere in this issue.)

John Carpenter was in London just before the television premiere of his brain-child. He was attending the 21st London Film Festival where his second movie, *Assault on Precinct 13*, was an unqualified smash-hit after similar triumphs at Cannes (and just like *Dark Star* itself) and Edinburgh.

We took the opportunity to track him down. Not difficult; then again, not so simple, either. The word emanating from the festival press office was that all the world wanted time with Carpenter. Along with the brilliant Indian director, Satyajit Ray (about to enter of realms himself, with Peter Sellers in *The Alien*), and Russia's new find, Larissa Shepitko, John Carpenter was the most in-demand interview subject of the event.

We avoided the press office, therefore, and contacted Carpenter at his hotel. Somehow, he managed to squeeze our late bid for a chat into a grueling afternoon of non-stop inter-

views, meetings with journalists and his London distributor—all relating to his *Precinct* film. We heard tell that he was, in fact, refusing to go back over tired old ground and talk about *Dark Star* any more. Not so. At least not with *Starburst*. Then again, we had an ace in the hole. It was Editor Dez Skinn who persuaded distributor David Grant of Oppidan to check into the possibility of hiving the film for British release.

One of the youngest and most original directors to break into Hollywood, John Carpenter was born in 1948 in Bowling Green, Kentucky. He attended college at Western Kentucky University and then at the Cinema Department at the University of Southern California. Here he made eleven student films, including editing and music work on the Academy Award winning film *The Reminiscence of Bronco Billy*.

Carpenter looks younger than Springtime, handsome enough to be on the acting side of his camera. He's loose, easy, dryly amusing, extremely co-operative. We caught him somewhere between sessions with *The Guardian and Sight and Sound*, and he appeared to relish the break from continually re-assaulting *Precinct 13*, turning the clock back and discussing the film that made his name. A tiny-budget effort of immense class that had first evolved in his talented head

when he was a student. The same school where a previous student had made a National Student Film Festival prize-winning short entitled *THX 1138:4EB*. George Lucas, no less. These days, Lucas and his other compus comrades—Bill Hayck, Matt Robinson, John Mills, et al—refer to themselves as the USC mafia. The way John Carpenter's career is going—upward, ever upward—he'll be one of the Dons before this year is over.

His major partner in the *Dark Star* enterprise was Dan O'Bannon—alias Sgt. Pinback in the film. O'Bannon, the son of a St Louis carpenter, made his first movie at Washington University—a one hour monster movie satire called *The Attack of the Fifty Foot Chicken*. He met up with Carpenter when he switched to U.S.C. Since *Dark Star*, O'Bannon has joined the endless roster of names associated with the special effects of *Star Wars*. While John Dykstra was responsible overall for the tricks in the Lucas film, Dan O'Bannon took charge of all the computer animation and graphic displays—an effect which also figures prominently in *Dark Star* . . . on which Dan supervised all the effects, including the miniatures of the spaceship, the bomb, the puppets representing the astronauts in long-shot, the space paintings and even building the distinctive star-suits.

Script extracts by John Carpenter and Dan O'Bannon reprinted courtesy of Oppidan Entertainment.

Part Two: The film that refused to die

SB: How did *Dark Star* actually begin?
Carpenter: At first, I was going to make a student film in 16mm at the University of Southern California. I had a thought about

a science fiction film and I came up with the idea of *Dark Star* and the plot. I teamed up with Dan O'Bannon who did the special effects. Basically, we took it from a \$6,000

student idea and made it into a \$60,000 feature film.

Lucas did the same thing with *THX* . . . which is also beginning to surface in Europe

only now. You didn't have his kind of financial backing, though.

No. Dan and I spent four years making *Dark Star*. Or put it another way, it took us four years to finish it. We ran out of money three times and every time another backer or another situation would come along it would make its way a little further. Finally, it got finished. It was first shown at Filmex (the Los Angeles Film Festival) in 1974—to an incredibly enthusiastic response. Then, for a year nothing happened. No distributor. The gentleman who owned the film was Jack H. Harris, maker of *The Blob* and other redheads!

I never know if that is meant as a compliment —maker of 'The Blob'—after his name . . .
I don't know either. . . . Anyway, he sat on the film and finally sold it to Bryanston Pictures. They released *Chain Saw Massacre* and they released Andy Warhol's *Frankenstein* and they gave us a big release in the United States—well, a pretty good release. But, basically, I think they handled it a little bit wrong. They advertised it as straight science-fiction movie. Which, of course, it is not. And it only did fair business. Then, Bryanston went bankrupt. . . . For a lot of reasons, not particularly because of *Dark Star*!

That's some chequered history!

Yeah, amazing, isn't it? So Bryanston went bankrupt and the film has been in limbo ever since. Now it's finally back in distribution. Not in the United States, or not that I know of very widely. But now it's finally coming out in Europe.

It's the film that refused to die—because you refused to let it die, right?
That's absolutely right.

Must have been an agonising four years though. Did you ever think of saying, 'The hell with it' and giving up the ghost?

You know, when you're young and naïve and you're obsessed with something, it consumes your life. Making *Dark Star* was actually easier than some of the projects that I'm doing now. Because I had such a love for the project. But yes, you're right, of course, it was very difficult. Fortunately both Dan and I believed in the film so much that we weren't going to let it die—ever! And we did everything we could do to keep it alive. Money was the worst problem. . . . the only real problem we ever faced on the film. I mean, we had horrible problems with the time delay. Our cast would cut their hair, get thinner, get fatter. . . . but that wasn't as extreme as you might think. We managed to cover that kind of thing up. Money was something else.

Did this mean compromises? Did your succession of new backers insist on deviations from your original conception.

Oh no. I maintained complete creative control throughout. I produced the film, I directed the film, I wrote and composed the music and did a great many of the special effects myself. Dan co-wrote the film with me. He designed the special effects, was the art director on the film, and

the editor—and he also acted in it.

Sgt. Pinback rules!

So we both did, basically, everything between us. The whole film is special effects, in fact—space craft, etc.—as the whole film takes place in a space ship in outer space. Essentially, I envisioned the picture as an adventure in outer space, and not so much as a comedy. The comedy elements just developed out of the situation. . . . I wanted to make a picture that would be a definitive work of my own style, of my own way of telling a story. . . . our concern was not so much with the gimmicks (a monster, a trick

were to shoot, the time—and of course, the money!—they were the biggest problems we had to face.

Okay, having dreamed up your plot—why and how was your film going to be any different, for good or bad, to the other of films of its day.

The uniqueness of *Dark Star* is not in the technology of the spaceship. Or what happens. It is in the situation. In the plot itself. Basically, it is an absurdist comedy. These men have been trapped in outer space for twenty years, dropping bombs on unstable planets, to destroy them and make



Talby (Dre Pahich) seems oblivious to the rest of the crew aboard the spaceship *Dark Star*.

environment, an unusual menace, a utopia, etc.) as it was with a dramatic situation. . . . I was just as concerned with the men as I was with the action. I was interested in the way they reacted to what they experienced. *If the backers left your script alone, what about the factual problems of your delayed shooting. The real changes and trends going on in NASA space news and because of that, changes in sf novel premises. Were you ever being left behind and having to simply get more up to date?*

Well, strangely enough, the film is not dated in the sense that technology has changed. We were lucky that way. It could still be shown five or six years from now. . . . *It will be, believe me.*

. . . and still kind of pass by okay. So, no, that wasn't any major problem for us. The mechanics of making the film, where we

way for colony ships that follow. And, well, the men had gone a little nuts in that spaceship. . . .

Sgt. Pinback is telling his buddies how he's not Sgt. Pinback at all, but a field maintenance technician, among the crew by accident.

Boiler: He told us this . . . four years ago, didn't he?

Lieut. Doolittle: No, I think it was four years ago.

Boiler: That's what I said . . . I'm sure it was four years ago.

Doolittle: Maybe. . . .



For a short time Talby (*Dave Padgug*) shakes off his indifference and investigates a malfunction in the thermostellar activating mechanism of the Dark Star.

Basically, the situation and the things they encounter make the film more unusual than the space-ship or the space-suits. *Star Wars*, for instance, or *2001*—the stars of those shows were the effects. Not in *Dark Star*. The situation is . . .

It's been said—and by one of our critics, in fact—that Dark Star is influenced by Dr. Strangelove, 2001, Marvel Comics and Waiting for Godot. What do you say?
That's about it . . . yes, I would agree with that. We decided that *Waiting for Godot* was a pretty good way to describe it. The



Doolittle (*Brian Narelle*) assumes command of the ship following Commander Powell's fatal accident.

men on the ship are constantly mentioning their dead commander. Finally, the situation arises where they have to talk to him and you learn that he was killed earlier, but put in a cryogenic freezer. His brain has been hooked up and he can still talk. But . . . he's senile. So when they have to try and get Commander Powell to answer a question, it's like talking to a very old man. He can't remember his name and so on. In that sense, it's a kind of a weird film.

Doolittle: Commander, sir, we have a big problem

Powell: Doolittle—you must tell me one thing.

Doolittle: What's that sir?

Powell: Tell me, Doolittle—how are the Dodgers doing?

Doolittle: The Dodgers . . .? They broke up. They disbanded over 15 years ago.

Powell: Pity. Pity.

Doolittle: But you don't understand sir. We can't get the bomb to drop!

Powell: . . . why don't you have anything nice to tell me when you activate me. Well now, did you try the azimuth approach?

Doolittle: Yes sir. Negative effect.

Powell: What was that, Doolittle?

Doolittle: Negative effect!

Powell: It didn't work?

Doolittle: That's correct, sir

Powell: Sorry, Doolittle. I've forgotten so much since I've been in here. So much.

You might not yet have the clout of a Lucas or a Spielberg, but you're beating Spielberg to the punch—in writing your own magical scores. Spielberg did this in his early 16mm films and would love to do it on a big feature; you compose your own music for every film you make.

The reason is all too simple. Financial. I'm the cheapest and the best composer I would get for the money . . . No, really, I would love to have hired someone else. My kind of budget never stretches that far. I use the synthesiser because I cannot write or arrange music—I can only hear it. So I over-dub myself again and again until the sound is right to me.

But you must have some kind of musical background, surely?

My father teaches music . . . but I rather rebelled against him insisting I learn as a kid. He wanted me to play piano and violin. I just have, as I say, an ear for it.

I've played—still do—in a rock band and written some of my own songs, and not just for the movies.

How long did it take you to set up your second film?

Dark Star came out in America in January of '75. I started shooting Assault in November of '75. In between them, I was busy with scripts. . . . I wrote a picture for Columbia which is now in production—Eyes, the new Faye Dunaway film (*Irvn Kershner is directing*)—and that allowed me to get money and backing for Assault on Precinct 13. These two films that I have made so far have established me as a director—in Europe. But not in America.

Do you understand why that is?

Well, no, I don't know. It's a puzzle to me. Basically, the films are very stylized. They are not realistic psychological dramas. They're not big budgeted blockbusters. They have a lot to do with old movies though. Because I'm a great fan of old films. There are a lot of references in there . . .

And these are appreciated more in Europe you feel—even in this day of Mel Brooksism? Oh yes, totally. Mine are different references; not, for instance, merely the reference to old movie clichés. There is a bit of Howard Hawks, there is a bit of John Ford and Hitchcock in my films. And touches of other old films—slight, subtle things. But I don't think that's the main reason they're better received in Europe. I'm really not sure what the reason is. The style—maybe? The stylistic point of view. . . . All I do know is, I'm not making the kind of films that Hollywood used to make.

Where do you go from here—any projects? I have several films lined up—more tradi-

tional Hollywood films which frightens me a little bit. I'm about to do a comedy, Zuma Beach, for instance. I'm also producing two of my scripts for Warner Brothers this year: Prey and High Rise. John Wayne's company, Batjac, has another of my scripts, Blood River, but I don't know what's happening to or with it.

Captain's log . . . The short circuit in the rear seat panel which killed Commander Powell is still faulty. The storage—oh, because he's sitting next to Commander Powell's seat, it continues to bother Pinback. . . . Oh yeah—the storage area Nine self-destructed last week and destroyed the ship's entire supply of toilet paper. That's all.

Frightens you . . . ? Surely, today's American films are better than what could be termed traditional Hollywood films?

Well, I'm kind of depressed about the state of Hollywood movies. They're very pretentious, overly long, overly meaningful—laden with bull. I think they're pretty crappy, to be honest with you. I don't think films with style and a point of view are being made anymore. A lot of them are—well, take Star Wars for instance. Star Wars is a good movie. But it's not a great movie. Some of it is so poor—it just shows how starved people are for that kind of film, you know, with adventure and fun in it. And style.

When it's turned into a gigantic merchandising exercise. . . .

Well, that's deserved, I think.

Threeip Soap, you mean?

No, that's horrible. That makes me ready to kill!

Incidentally, were you a comic fan?

Oh sure, very much so. Marvel Comics, I loved. And Superman and stuff like that. Do you storyboard your movies?

Yes, but not with a comic strip look to it. I'm much simpler than that. I don't sketch out the entire frame, for instance. I sketch out very briefly for myself. Often I don't draw it as much as I make floor plans. But I do storyboard some of the more intricate sequences . . .

Storyboarding trans out your visual plans?

Yeah. I draw all the action sequences—and others. Any scenes where I'm concerned with building suspense and tempo. If you want to involve an audience in a sequence, one in which the visuals are more important than any dialogue of exposition, you need to have the shots very clearly defined in your head. Or on paper. You put down what it is you want to see—them to see—and when to see it.

Since our interview, John Carpenter has begun directing yet another of his tales, a horror-thriller called Halloween. Sounds good!

Dark Star (1970-1974)

Dan O'Bannon (*as Pinback*), Brian Narelle (*Doolittle*), Andrejask Pabich (*Talby*), Carl Kunihtoin (*Boiler*), Joe Saunders (*Commander Powell*), Cookie Krupp (*Computer*), Miles Watkins (*Mission Control*).
Directed by John Carpenter, Screenplay by John Carpenter and Dan O'Bannon, Music by John Carpenter, Design by Dan O'Bannon.

Time: 83 mins

Cert: A



When Bomb No 20 refuses to disarm itself and return to the bomb bay, Doolittle (Brian Narelle) is forced to consult Commander Powell (Joe Saunders) for advice.

Send all comments and queries to us at:
STARBURST LETTERS,
 Jedwhe Hoare,
 205-211 Kantish Town Road,
 London NW5.

I must write to congratulate you on the first three editions of your excellent magazine. I enjoyed the articles on Close Encounters, Star Wars and The Prisoner.

A few queries, however; what happened to the promised series of short stories? OK, so the Hairy Harrison was just a "name" to push sales, but why give up? Of course, Starburst isn't destined to be a story magazine but one a month would make Starburst more interesting, I feel.

Also, I'd like to see articles on the Gerry Anderson tv shows, Dr Who, The Twilight Zone, The Incredible Hulk and Land of the Giants. In fact, articles on everything! Can we have interviews with Richard Matheson, George Pal and John Dykstra? And I would like you to publish some information about the British Science Fiction Association, (I am anxious to join).

The magazine should expand. If more pages (negatives) were added, surely the cost wouldn't be too great? Please keep the glossy pages you have at the moment, though; they make the magazine very attractive.

Concerning comic strips I would like to say that the only decent one so far has been Brian Lewis's Spaceburst. If you're going to have any at all, either back them either humorous or reprints (Flash Gordon, Buck Rogers etc.).

Another thing, on browsing through some old editions of the ill-fated Science Fiction Monthly I find that a fine production of Frank Herbert's Dune was under way (the blurb on the NEL pageback cover confirms this). Will you kindly publish more information on the film in *Things To Come*? I'm sure, as it was first run, Orson Welles and Salvador Dali to star, with Chris Foss-designed monsters?

Stephen J. New, Panton Grafton, Hants.

Aerostar line: As with all magazines, Stephen, we're getting a format and identity as the weeks go by. This means modification to our original concepts as we hopefully improve. Both comic strips and short stories are the main casualties in our development.

We feel that Starburst is a unique product, with a specific audience. To incorporate stories and strips only weakens that content, and detracts from its originality. Also, there's so much of media news, we just can't do the space!

As with last issue's "A Good Woman", we'll slip in something different from time to time, to make the content more interesting, but not as regular features.

The chosen treatment for Dune, unfortunately moved down a while back (before the contest at all) although there are rumours of it going back into production, possibly utilising the Chris Foss designs along with the Jean YVES (Moesha) art creations originally commissioned.

Finally, cover pages would mean a cover price increase. Only time (and your letters) will tell.

The highlight of Starburst 3 was John Brosnan's *History of Science Fiction Films*. A very informative article, but the photographs were not, in my opinion, representative of the best of films, excepting Silents Running and Rollerball.

The two articles on Close Encounters of the Third Kind were also excellent. John Brosnan's review of the film was a lot better than Ray Bradbury's in

Starburst 2. There was a very good choice of photographs for both the features.

The article on Saperman—The Movie was very good but I felt that it was a little too short. Perhaps you could do a feature on the previous screen interpretation of Saperman, comparing the old version of the Man of Steel to the new.

I'd also like to see features as such as shows as The Time Tunnel and Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea.

Michael Connolly, Co Armagh, N. Ireland.

One fantasy tv series which I remember but have never seen mentioned anywhere in print was called, simply, The Monsters. It was a BBC production about huge prehistoric lizards inhabiting an underground cavern, coming to the surface to terrorise the local countryside. One vivid scene occurs when the heroine is menaced by one of the monsters while in her kitchen. The image of massive, sharp claws crashing through a window blind is hard to forget. Does anyone else remember this short-lived series?

Brian Cardoff, Balfast, N. Ireland.

Brief reply, Brian . . . no. Perhaps some readers can help?

On the whole an excellent magazine but . . . please stop criticising programmes such as Mue from Atlantis and The Gemini Man as they appeal to a different kind of audience. Don't forget that people have different tastes.

How would you like it if somebody criticised what, in your opinion, was a great film.

You should take more care in case you find any fans on your doorstep.

Malenia Casson, New Milton, Hants.

I like Starburst very much and I hope you will be around for many months to come, but I would just like to voice a request and a complaint. While you are running articles and reviews of sf in film and tv, we have seen nothing on sf in comics past and present. So how about a feature on the American comic company of the fifties, EC? Some of their sf was classic stuff. Or you could cover the British contribution with such stuff as *Tigra Empire* and reproduce some of *Illustrator* Don Lawrence's art.

Nicholas Cory Wright, Nantwich, Ssex.

Thanks for a superb magazine, unique in its field. It gives reports on all the great of films currently in release. Your Star Wars coverage in full colour was fantastic. Indeed you have created a magazine which is so important to the younger generation as it gives them adventures far beyond their imagination.

Adrian English, Gosport, Hants.

I think Starburst is a great magazine. The colour photos are great and the space cruiser poster in issue 2 was fantastic.

The only complaint I have is that the magazine seems to be devoted to fairly new films and tv programmes. If you were to publish features on the sf films of the fifties and of the little-seen films like Dark Star, Starburst would be unbeatable.

K. Bramber, Stevenage, Herts.

Dark Star? You've got it. But we won't let our new "unbeatable" status go to our heads. In fact, we welcome your opinion which, or you can see by readers' requests this month, we do not open.

I am just writing to say how much I enjoyed that super tv series Blake's 7. It may be pure Space Opera, but I think the characters and scripts pull it above the average fare.

I have been a fan of it for many years now and always welcome a new series. At first I thought Blake's 7 was going to be one of these series where all the main characters hog the limelight and take everything too seriously. I was very pleased to see that the two ladies were just as important as the men and there was a continuing vein of humour brought in, mainly by the lovable character Vila.

So let's have a lot more about this highly entertaining series. Maybe a few interviews or features.

It just proves Britain can turn out an excellent (despite the low budget) series that stands up to the best of the American produce.

Jayne Dickinson, Scarborough.

I like the Starburst interviews, they are a good idea. However, I thoroughly agree with the various readers who complained about the comic strips. If someone wants to look at comic strips they can go out and buy a comic. Starburst is an intelligent review/preview magazine not a comic book.

The Saperman and Spiderman previews (Starburst 3 and 2 respectively) were great but I would have liked to have read a little more of the plots.

Here are some things I would like to see in future issues of Starburst. Enlarge and develop *Things to Come*. It is good but there isn't enough of it. Give more details of the plots, characters and settings of the films mentioned. Also don't waste space on film posters. Show a still from the film instead.

I would also like to see articles on the creation of such Gerry Anderson tv series as UFO, Captain Scarlet, Thunderbirds and Fireball XLS with plenty of colour stills.

How about features on some of the following: Beast from 20,000 Fathoms, This Island Earth, Them, Fein Project, Rollerball, Westworld and Futureworld?

Marcus Norris, Woodbridge, Suffolk.

Starburst is an excellent magazine, leagues ahead of its competition in every respect.

One point, though, the cover proclaims Starburst to be devoted to: "Science Fantasy in Television, Cinema and Comic". The television and cinema aspects of sf are well covered, but as far as comics go, two stories each issue and nothing else.

The history of science fiction in comic strip form goes back as far as the thirties and Flash Gordon. Since then both newspaper strips and comic books have contributed much to the genre, some of the material has been mediocre stuff but some is well worth remembering. E.C.'s *Brachy* adaptations of the fifties for instance and Marvel comics' *Killraven*. The field is wide and still thriving today, mainly in the U.S. and occasionally in Britain. Contrary to popular belief comic fans are not illiterate and there is much that could be written about this colourful branch of science fiction.

M. Dyer, Banstead, Surrey.

Consider it being written, M. Marvel from movie sf to comics appeared last month as the first part of our globe-trotting series. Britain, Europe and beyond are to follow.

Issue 3 is well on the way to being exactly what I've been waiting for all those years; a chance to catch up on these little details about the ether-swallowed tv series that made me a compulsive cast-list reader, and a chance to answer the nagging little questions like—am I right in thinking that "Get Off My Cloud" from the

LETTERS

1950 Out of the Unknown rut is the only fictional programme (apart from Dr Who) to have featured the Daleks?

Thinking of Out of the Unknown, it provided the perfect example of the differences between American story-telling and British drama in that both it and Serling's Night Gallery produced versions of C. M. Cornbluth's "The Little Black Bag" which were screened in this country within one week of each other (I preferred the BBC version, but both had their points). Comparisons of this kind bring me to Logan, and Blake, And Tise Vahnagel.

How many episodes of Blake's 7 had Tise seen when this review was written? I'll be charitable and assume that it was only the first 5, because to be fair the series didn't really get moving until Travis arrived on the scene in "Seek-Locate-Destroy", and even then Nation almost blew all credibility by ripping off a Star Trek plot for the "Duel" episode. But this doesn't mean that the whole series should be condemned by an unrealistic comparison with a film spin-off made on a vastly superior budget and with a vastly inferior cast (why on earth this country has to spend a fortune on importing second rate US rubbish when we're perfectly capable of producing first rate rubbish of our own is quite beyond me. One thing's for sure—they're better salesmen than we are!).

Above all, Blake's 7 was fun. Any of series which has its hero escape from a fairy-tale castle in a vintage automobile by means of "a teleportation process" (Blake's words) just has to have a sense of humour—not to mention that surprise ending which makes it clear as if it were the first of series since Doomwatch to have its second series overlapping its first by way of explanation (not that anyone who really paid attention to the last 5 minutes of "Duel" will need an explanation

—but I hope Terry Nation provides one, nevertheless). In fact, since the standard of BT rose steadily throughout the series it could find itself in the almost unique position of having a second series which is better than the first—I hope so. Oh stars, I hope so! Doomwatch never managed it, but then, how could any series have survived the catastrophic results of what happened on the end of the pier at Byfield Regis on 17th May 1970 in what must have been the most ineptly lifted episode of all time—"Survival Code"?

Speaking of Doomwatch—whatever happened to the film version of the series which was being made in 1971? I don't recall ever having seen it on the circuit. Did it ever actually get that far? Films and programmes which have sunk without trace aren't unusual, of course. As far as I'm aware the only named "Out of Mind", 6th episode of the BBC's 1965 series Counterstrike, has never been shown since its cancellation on 13th October of that year, and probably never will be now partly because it was made in black & white and there seems to be a general assumption that people today don't want black & white except when it's in a vintage film. I can honestly say that every of programme I've ever enjoyed, from Garmen to Blake's 7, I've seen on b&w. Last year's report of Nigel Kneale's "1934" was actually enhanced by this vintage quality—giving a sense of squall expression that I'm sure was never intended when it was made in 1954.

Let me echo your correspondent's request for a feature on the work of the Anderson studios, and add a plea of my own for something similar on the subject of Kneale's contributions to the genre—from 1964 to last month's Radio 4 morning story The Pool (well, perhaps not that comprehensive but it does give me an excuse to mention that the much neglected medium of radio

(which brought us War of the Worlds) has now come up with the 1st series to end of series is The Witch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy—look—target books, comics, films and tv—how would you rate a 6 episode series that starts with the destruction of the Earth and by episode 4 has turned a nuclear warhead into a pot of petroleum and is about to present the destruction of the Universe and the Second Coming of the Great Prophet Zarquon for the amusement of a group of miser diaries from the halls of Asgard?

All right, point taken, this is meant to be about tv and film of, but thanks for Starburst—long may it reign!
 Jean Shaward, Dover, Kent.

Somewhat tough to follow, Jean . . . short of saying a Terry Nation interview is coming soon. We'll try to get him to answer your questions.

I much enjoyed the features on Star Wars and Star Trek, the reprint of Jeff Hawke adventures (more please, he's been sadly missed since the Express dropped him) and the Things to Come feature.

Items I would like to see in future editions—behind the scenes of Space: 1999, and a feature on Dan Dare from the bygone Eagle. (I've heard all kinds of rumours about a DO feature film being made, a possible tv cartoon series and even old story reprints—any truth in this?)

Thanks again for a first class of magazine, best wishes for the future . . .

Red Baxley, Weymouth, Dorset.

Dan Dare is enjoying a "Dirty Harry" comeback in IPC's 2000AD these days. But the movie seems to be off. Red, it's been quietly doing the Star Trek on off game for a few years, so there may still be a chance.

Two more from Marvel this month!

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The Starburst Interview

DOUGLAS TRUMBULL

The Wizard of Special Effects

"If Trumbull hadn't accepted the job, I'd still be on the Columbia backlot, trying to get a cloud to materialise out of thin air. One of Doug's secrets is knowing who to

hire. He has a nose for talent and at the worst possible time of the year—when everybody was tied up in the big special-effects boom of 1975/6—Doug managed

to attract a small treasure chest of specialists. . . ."—Steven Spielberg writing in *American Cinematographer* magazine.

They call him up. They write and enclose little films of their own effects, sometimes feeble, sometimes ingenious. Indeed, mid-way through an afternoon with us at Chrises Hotel in London, he took a phone call from a British special effects hopeful who wanted to know how to get into this specialised film field and had a movie to show . . .

They're attracted to him because quite simply Douglas Trumbull is a master of his chosen art-form. The master of movie illusions. From 2001 to CE3K.

He works on each new effect idea from start to finish, no matter how long it may take him and his similarly ingenious team to accomplish. To, quite simply, look right. Except it's never simple. He achieves the impossible without us realising it's an effect, a trick. His is a crafty craft.

At the moment, together with the special effects team at his company, Future General, he's polishing what promises to be the most revolutionary new screen process created since film itself. It's been called Futurex—and Showscan. Trumbull hasn't officially christened it as yet, just referring to it as "the process". He will say more (much more in Part Three of this interview). . . . "It's going to blow everybody out. This new system has a tremendous impact on the human nervous system. We discovered some principles of projecting movies that will make all movies we see today seem obsolete."

And he means it. His process requires new cameras, new projectors, new sound, new screens. In short: new theatres!

Once finally tested and financially approved by Paramount Pictures, he will produce and direct the first movie in the process. He has the choice of two scenarios that he's been developing for years.

And so, Douglas Trumbull, 35, is about to follow Lucas and Spielberg—more than likely, overhaul them both—into movie history, spectacular fame, *Time* front covers, box-office records, great sf acclaim . . . and

Starburst glory.

And about time, too.

The son of artist and engineer Donald Trumbull, Doug was born in Los Angeles, educated at the Morningside High School at Inglewood and El Camino College. His greatest influence, though, was Walt Disney.

At 12, he was making his own special-effects movies. Rudimentary stuff with an 8mm camera on a tripod, teaching himself how to trick his audience.

Around 20, he got into illustration, switched to animation and painted the back-grounds for N.A.S.A. promotion films about



the Apollo Moon programme.

At 23, he was hired by Stanley Kubrick as one of his four Special Effects Supervisors on the godfather of all modern sf films, 2001: *A Space Odyssey*. He invented the slit-scan device utilised during the climactic Corridors of Light sequence.

There followed, as he explains later, a surprising void. No one really took up the gauntlet that Kubrick had flung down.

In 1970, Trumbull worked on Robert Wise's less than successful attempt, *The Andromeda Strain*. He created a special zoom-microscope and camera set-up allowing

the audience to see what the scientists saw through their micro-lenses. He also helped design a special 2,000-line high-resolution television system for the film. (British TV works on 405 or 625 lines; American TV uses 525 lines).

And then, of course, in 1971, he directed his debut feature, *Silent Running*, about due for its second BBC-tv airing, after being one of the few distinct joys of viewing last Christmas. It's a film that *Star Wars* owes as much to as any other major sf enterprise.

Then came a more personal void. Fed up with Hollywood, Trumbull quit movies and began dabbling in his other marked passion, also Disney-influenced—amusement parks. He also started work on creating his new wonder process for Future General, the company he founded, in collaboration with Paramount in 1973.

After what has seemed an eternity out in the cold, Trumbull is now back on screen, better than ever. He refused the *Star Wars* job, supplying instead the devastating magic for Steven Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. Illusions par excellence.

That's the last time he'll be supplying his amazing visuals for someone other than himself if everything becomes go with the far-from-inexpensive new process. "I don't want to be known as a special-effects man, because I look on all movie-making as a special effect. So I'm going to write, produce and direct my own work in the future."

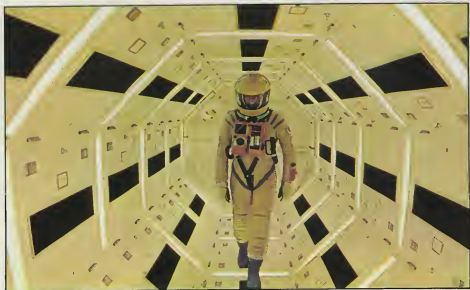
Ask him what kind of future and he'll reply with a question "What would it be like to go into a theatre where the picture is a giant 3D hologram and you're part of it? That's very much like what we're working with right now."

Sounds like *Futureworld* meets *Fahrenheit 451*. Or better still, 2001 meets CE3K.

In short, it sounds a consummation devoutly to be wished. And if there's one man in Hollywood—in the film world at large—who can achieve it, that man is Douglas Trumbull.

Interview by Tony Crawley

Opposite above: Bowman (Keir Dullea) heads for the nerve centre of the rebellious computer, Hal 9000. Below: The rescue of Poole (Gary Lockwood) is attempted by Bowman, piloting a one-man space pod. From 2001: *A Space Odyssey*.



Part 1. From 2001 to Silent Running.

Starburst: Your *Silent Running* cameraman, Charles F. Wheeler, likened you to a teenage hippy talking like Albert Einstein. Steven Spielberg hailed you as the next Disney. How do you see yourself—and your cinema aims?

Trumbull: Well... I would describe myself as a film-maker—interested in furthering the potential of the medium, I guess. I'm in the area of creating experiences that are beyond the realm of physical reality. I think that, fairly recently, movies have not been taking advantage of the potential of the medium. When so much became available technologically—the lightweight cameras and lights—everyone went out and started shooting on location. They were always out on the streets of New York or Los Angeles or San Francisco shooting film, cranking out an enormous volume of television business. It just became a blitz of movies which were super-documentaries in a sense.

While you were creating visual illusions rather than this all too simplified method of... well, recording life?

Exactly right. This whole sort of portable-movie generation brought about the end of the major studios. Or almost did... It became a big trend away from a lot of the art which had grown out of the studios. I grew up on a lot of Disney full-length cartoons. Stuff like that, and *The Wizard of Oz*, always fascinated me. I'd like to see more of that kind of thing done. There is so much more at our disposal now, technologically, chemically, electronically... oh, every other way.



More animation, you mean?

I'm not into cartoon animation, per se. Animation, in my mind, is just a concept of shooting anything one frame at a time. Which is, essentially, what visual-effects are all about. There's an enormous amount of animation, for instance, in *Close Encounters*. But there certainly aren't any cartoon characters jumping around.

*Excepting *Duck Dodgers* on the *Dreyfus* television set...*

I just like the magic of visual-effects—opticals, miniatures, photographic effects. I'm experimenting with them now for this new process I've been working on, getting into a new area of visual-effects that very

few people have really explored. It's really in the area of painting with light. So the future for me may be more effects like the end of 2001—which sort of set a path for me.

And everyone else. Except you're still very much alone in pioneering such effects.

We thought at the time that 2001 would start a big trend. It really didn't. Kubrick didn't just jump into making another science-fiction movie, to try and top himself. In fact, 2001 left a huge void... The main effect it had, still has today in fact, is that people look at 2001 and say, "No one's ever going to do this again. No one's ever going to have the patience, the money or the



talent to pull it together."

Nor did they, until some of your fans grew up, got into movies, and eventually became powerful enough to set up their own response to 2001—namely, Lucas and Spielberg.

Right. Exactly right! It's been a long wait. You didn't wait so long. . . . When did you first get into movie-making?

As a kid, like Spielberg, I used to make time-laps movies about things being built. . . . I made a sort of strange special-effects movie, not really very special, but full of ways of shooting to create illusions. Very simple things. But at least I figured out you could mount a camera on a tripod . . . and one of the neat things about an 8mm camera was that you can turn it on and off instantly. You could make cuts right there in the camera.

I didn't know anything about editing, but I worked it out. I used to set up a camera on a tripod, have a friend of mine climb into a barrel, while another friend stood alongside it. Then, after the first guy was in the barrel, I'd cut the camera. He'd get out of the barrel and out of the way. Roll the camera again—and the other guy



would push the barrel off a cliff. It would roll to the bottom. Cut the camera again and . . . well, you know, dumb little things like that.

From little acorns . . .

It gave me an understanding of what I could do in order to create in a viewer's mind the illusion that something believable was going on. . . . That was always amusing to me, I guess.

But then you went in for architecture. How come the switch to real movie-making?

When I was studying to be an architect, I got into a lot of drawing classes and felt more interested in the art itself, rather than the architecture. I started painting and illustrating, got a couple of jobs doing work for advertising agencies and in technical illustration.

Plus a couple of sf book covers, I understand?
No . . . about the only thing I ever had published was a double-page spread in the souvenir book of the New York World's

**"We thought at the time that
2001 would start a big trend.
It didn't!"**

Fair in 1964. It wasn't until I got an illustrator's job—and I got it because I was interested—that I really became frustrated by it. My paintings didn't move.

An age-old complaint.

You'd paint them and they'd just lay there. There wasn't the dynamic action to them that I'd grown up with in the Disney cartoons. I guess it was because of the Disney influence that I became interested in animation and sort of stumbled into a job



in Los Angeles, with a company doing very technical animation—Graphic Films. We mostly did space orientated stuff for NASA and the USAF, simulation films, showing what it would be like going to the Moon.

The kind of things we've seen on TV? Giving stage-by-stage simulations of a particular Apollo mission?

I guess bits and pieces of them came out on TV, but they were mostly used internally, by the US Government, as a sales tool to promote the funds. Because of that, I got to work on this film for the New York World's Fair—The Moon and Beyond. I illustrated all the backgrounds for that.

"It wasn't until I got a job in illustration that I really became frustrated — my pictures didn't move!"

And this time, they moved.

Yeah! And Kubrick saw that film. That's how I got my job on 2001. Two and a half years in London!

Much longer than your Close Encounters schedule. Is that simply because you'd broken all the new ground on 2001?

I think so, yes. 2001 was going to school. When I started on 2001, I was 23, and didn't know anything about photography—and learned it. We all learned it. We were making it up as we went along. (Laugh.) And it cost a lot of money and it took a lot of time.

What do you think of it now?

Like everyone else, I think 2001 is going to be very hard to beat. In terms of its classic film nature, more than its hardware and special-effects. It's possible now with all the new equipment and techniques of our industry, to make the technical equivalent of 2001. In much less time, much less effort. For example, Star Wars which has a lot of hardware. . . .

Opposite above: Poole (Gary Lockwood, left) and Bowman (Keir Dullea) futilely seek privacy from the computer, Hal 9000. Centre: Bowman enters the zero-G memory unit of the computer. Below: Bowman at the controls of the space pod. From 2001: A Space Odyssey.



Director Douglas Trumbull and star Bruce Dern discuss the buggy scene on the set of *Silent Running*.

There are various stories that Spielberg was continually screening 2001 while making Close Encounters. Was that for inspiration, guidance—was it even true at all?

I don't really know. I, personally, didn't experience Spielberg running the film. I've only read about it. I don't know if it's an overblown story or not. I think he did screen it once or twice, and I would say, just from looking at Close Encounters, that 2001 had some influence on it . . . in getting into that whole area of non-verbal magnificence, which is really what happens at the end of the movie.

Doesn't it though—mind-blowingly so!

Thank you.

After 2001, it came as scant surprise that you worked on The Andromeda Strain, but what, pray, were you doing working on a daft movie like Candy?

Oh . . . oh! I never even talk about that. . . . Why not?

An unfortunate experience for me. . . . I had

been very used to doing this incredibly high-quality work for Stanley, having a lot of super 70mm equipment on the floor, but when this Candy thing came up I was trying to get started with my own business and had none of my own cameras or optical equipment. They wanted me to do a titles sequence for them, nothing particularly challenging was needed, but I did a couple

"I would describe myself as a film-maker—interested in furthering the potential of the medium."

of really interesting experimental things. Unfortunately, it ended up having to be sub-contracted to an optical house who, essentially, destroyed it. It got further duped when the film's prints were made.

Which taught you to get your own optical house in order.

Right. Most of this business, ultimately, is

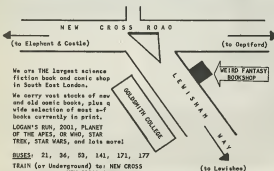


An example of Trumbull's excellent special effects for the film *Silent Running*, which he also directed.

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the quality-control problem.
2001 is due for a new airing this year. Any chance of a similar re-release for *Silent Running*?

I really wouldn't know. I've no idea what Universal's plans are for it. It would be nice, but it's not something I'm pushing for. *Silent Running* was, as you know, my first film, an experiment for me as a film director. I'm very proud of the film, but I think everyone has a limited amount of energy to expend in their lives and I'd rather spend mine moving forward to my next project, rather than grind my teeth against Universal Pictures to re-issue *Silent Running*.

What happened to you after Silent Running? You seemed to disappear from view... long before you surfaced, dabbling in amusement parks.

Actually, there was a short, intervening couple of years when I was putting together several projects that I was to direct. And it was just a series of... well, just bad luck really.

"*Silent Running* was my first film, an experiment for me as a film director. I'm very proud of the film."

The real problem in the motion picture industry—in Hollywood, anyway—is the studio executives are constantly playing a game of musical chairs. If you've developed a project, have a script, and are all ready to shoot, when the executive responsible gets axed—your project is dropped with him. That happened to me three times in a row! And always with projects that were rather speculative in nature. I've spent my whole life pushing to do things that were quite unusual—and that frightens people a lot. I had two or three very big projects in mind that would have been really mind-boggling films.

Pyramid, for example? Which was set 500 years from now.

Yeah! *Pyramid* was an incredible project that would have really hit right on the mark. The audience was there for it. I think the

"*Pyramid* was an incredible project that would really have hit right on the mark."

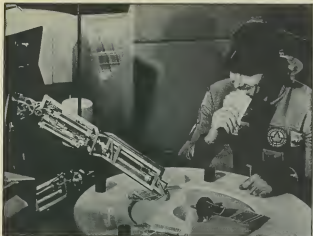
audience is still there for it, as a matter of fact.

But if your executive guy gets sacked, your project goes down the tubes with him!

Except that with *Pyramid*, I was with MGM. We had offices there and we spent several hundred-thousand dollars developing the project. We had story-boarded it, locations scouted, models of the sets built, art-directors working—everything! Then, MGM just decided they weren't going to make movies anymore!

The ultimate axe job.

This wasn't just one executive being axed—



The show-stealers of *Silent Running* were the three robots. Here Bruce Dern plays cards with one of the 'droids.

but the entire studio! They closed down the whole place.

I just went into shock. It's very depressing to see a lot of money get spent and a lot of your own psychic energy go into a project that simply doesn't happen. For all the wrong reasons.

And it isn't politic, I suppose, to take that project across the street to another outfit?

No, there's all kinds of timing problems. You have to let things cool off. And make

"I would say that 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea is the best special effects film I've ever seen."

sure you've played all the right political games.

No wonder you turned to amusement parks. I got very discouraged. I felt the motion picture business was strait-jacketed in a certain kind of attitude. I felt that the financial and business aspects of it were just so unpleasant that I wanted to look at other ways of making a living. I was so frustrated I felt there had to be other ways of doing this—entertaining people. And there are. People are willing to do all kinds of things, pay all kinds of money to be entertained in a million different ways.

Again, I grew up with Disneyland and I've always been fascinated with amusement parks the whole idea of illusions and experiences they generate within the rides and some of the other things Disney did there. I also had some idea for a new film process. And through a series of contacts, I was able to propose a development company with Paramount Pictures: their minds were very much along these lines at the time. We set up three different companies,

two of which are still intact, to do research and development into entertaining people, bringing the technology of movie-making to new fields.

A lot of my ideas went beyond the new process, covering ways to deal with new applications of film. I mean, I'm a film person. I'm into films. I did not just want to drop the cinema altogether. I simply wanted to find a different way to do it.

When you form a Future General—or any special effects film crew—how do you staff it. Where do you find the people—or do they find you? Do they write to you, enclosing effects samples on film?



Trumbull is introduced to Her Majesty The Queen at the premiere of *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*.

Sometimes, they do, yes. That's part of how to get a team together. As a matter of fact, when people do call me or send me films, I usually take them pretty seriously—because it doesn't happen very often. Strangely enough, there are not very many people who *actively* want to be in this particular business—or have any understanding of how to get into it. There's no film schools for special effects. No one that can train

"I've spent my whole life pushing to do things that were quite unusual — and that frightens people!"

you. Most of the people who can work well in the kind of team I do, are self-taught... just strangely determined people.

... turned on, like you, by Disney, and as time goes by, by 2001 and now CE3K.

That's it. They'll come to me with their little 8mm or 16mm animated films or model films they've done. That's exactly what I was into when I was 12 years old—making special effects films. So was Steven Spielberg.

Until you, more than anyone, broke new ground on effects, what was the best special effects film that you'd seen?

I would probably say 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea. That was really a well-made picture—the height of Disney's operation in my opinion. Disney at its best!

Something else you and Spielberg agree on. That's why he lured out of retirement the man who made the Leagues squid, Bob Mattey, to make Bruce the Jaws shark.

Next issue Douglas Trumbull talks about his involvement with one of the most important of movies of all time, Close Encounters of the Third Kind.

Festival Fantasy

Starburst presents a brief look at the sf movies that were on show at the 31st Cannes Film Festival.

Surprise, surprise. There were very few sf movies around in the ever-bulging film market of the Cannes Film Festival in France earlier this year. There was, however, news of plenty, and a bunch of pure fantasy movies were being touted around as science fiction. Except for Japan's unintentionally funny answer to Star Wars, *Message from Space*, which is technically good but dramatically akin to the animated *Space Cruiser* (see review in Starburst 2) and Canada's early response to CE3K, *Starship Invasions* with Christopher Lee and Robert Vaughan, there was precious little of the real stuff. The surprise lies in the fact that there were 20 screens in town churning out, between them, 200 films, non-stop, every day. You'd think that somewhere amongst all that celluloid there would be more sf than that.

Other screen delights included *Aliens* from Spaceship Earth with music by



Donovan—and also from the States, something entitled *Hardware Wars*... "a spectacular space saga of romance, rebellion and household appliances". Yes, well Cannes is a trifle mad in May.

Cannes '78 denoted the calm before the storm, judging by the rash number of multi-million dollar sf ventures being announced. Now that the market appears not merely established but respectable (financially, that is) every one and his father is getting in on the act. Next year, Cannes should be a Cape Kennedy launching pad for the proliferation of

space and sf minded endeavours.

And all of them probably too late... Why, even the East Germans have already finished their space drama, *In the Dust of the Stars* (alternatively titled *Star Dust*, see the review elsewhere in this issue)—the second space thriller from Dr Gottfried Kolditz. It's about nefarious goings on on the planet TEM 4. And, as only to be expected, the commander of the heroic Eastern Bloc space ship *Cyrno 19/4* is a woman—blonde Czech star Jana Brejchova.

All of which puts Sir Lew Grade firmly in his place. He announced an sf biggie

We know they are here.

What do they want?

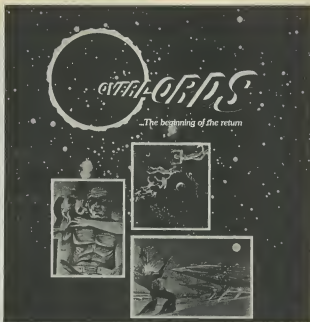
STARSHIP INVASIONS

called Saturn 6 to star Farrah Fawcett-Majors . . . "and a robot" (Lee Majors?). Avco-Embassy is similarly lavishing up to \$10 million on *The Overlords*, due out in May 1979, though no director has been named to succeed the late William Girdler, from whose original idea the movie stems.

Also announced with the usual fanfares—the shooting date for Harry Alan Towers' re-make of *The Shape of Things to Come*. This has already been sold to a dozen countries, less on Mr. Towers' name, I'm sure, than on his selection of Space: 1999's Sylvia Anderson as creative consultant and indeed of author H. G. Wells' son Frank as scientific consultant.

From Pascal Duffard Productions in Paris came the hot news (at last) of two new movies from El Topo's Alejandro Jodorowsky, including Mexican locations and the use of "6,000 hyper-realistic dummies" in *Museum Earth* or "Life on Earth in 1978 AD as seen through the eyes of inhabitants of a distant planet 100,000 years after our terrestrial world was destroyed in a huge explosion."

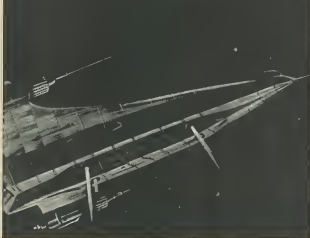
Far more interesting, as we hope to expand upon later, is the prize-winning Belgian trilogy, *Experts of Evil*, described as an ABC of modern society. Atomic bomb; Bacteriological accidents; and Chemical warfare. The bomb tale was made by Robbe de Hert and the other two by Guido Henderickx. The film hails from the friendly sounding Paul de Vree and his Lonely Filmmers. Lonely no more,



H.G. WELLS'

"THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME"

Executive Producer HARRY ALAN TOWERS
World Sales Representatives PAUL KAZZIER



we trust.

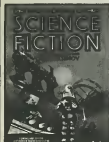
Better still, the news from Limelight Films of London about a series of sf movies being adapted from their own books (by gulp!) Isaac Asimov, Arthur C. Clarke, Robert Heinlein, Harry Harrison, Brian Aldis, James Ballard, A. E. Van Vogt, Poul Anderson, Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle, Hal Clement and Joe Haldeman. Can't be bad!

The biggest street advertising in Cannes, though, was for Italy's *The Humanoid*, starring 007's mighty nemesis Richard "Jaws" Kiel as an indestructible victim of an evil scientist's atomic blast. Donald Pleasance has, alas, pulled out of playing this particular nasty intent on creating a superhuman force to shatter the peace of the fifth galactic empire. George B. Lewis directs; Ennio Morricone supplies the music; and skyscraper-tall Kiel gets to play yet again alongside his Bond film co-star Barbara Bach and Corinne Clery from *The Story of O*.

Italy could have a decent winner on their hands with this one. Except, as I left Cannes, a little man from the Japanese Toho company handed me a poster for their new film which has UFO witnesses becoming social outcasts when their blood turns blue. Hmm, I thought. Then I saw the title . . . *Humanoid*. Rare indeed for the Italian to be so smartly ripped off. But that's Cannes—and the film business—for you.

BOOK WORLD

Reviews by Alex Carpenter



ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION

Consultant Editor: Robert Holdstock

In the past few months there have been a number of books published giving an overall coverage of the science fiction field but this hardback volume is the most visually attractive.

As usual with an Octopus publication, it is crammed with full colour illustrations: no matter where you open the book there is a printing or a photograph encouraging you to read the text to discover more about the illustration. The text itself is divided into the kind of headings that are expected in a book of this type and include Locations, Alien Encounters, and Art And The Artist, to mention but a few. Each chapter has been written by a famous figure in the sf field, including Harry Harrison, Patrick Moore and Christopher Priest. This ensures the writing is of a standard that matches the high quality of the art and the *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* comes highly recommended. Published by Octopus Books, 224 pages, £4.95.



MASTERS OF COMIC BOOK ART

by P. R. Garriock

If you number yourself amongst those who are puzzled by the spurge in interest in comic strip art, then this book will go some way towards explaining the reasons.

Comic Book Art contains the work of ten of the artists that "Doc" Garriock considers to be the tops in

their field. I doubt that everybody will agree with his choice but, when you consider that he included Bellamy, Carben, Eisner, Smith and Wood, it is doubtful that anybody would argue that these, and the others, should not have been included.

The book is excellently presented and apart from many reproductions of their work (much in colour) there is included a bibliography on each. It is probably a little overpriced for the casual reader but, would be of interest nevertheless. Published by Aurora Press, 128 pages, £4.95.



FANDOM'S FILM GALLERY 3 Edited by Jan Van Geenechten

FFG 3 has been a long time coming but when it finally arrived it was well worth the wait. Jan Van Geenechten published Fandom's Film Gallery as a means of gathering together detailed studies of major horror films (Issue 1: *Oracula* (1956) and 2: *Night of the Living Dead*) in one volume. This issue has 172 pages devoted to Hammer's *The Curse of the Werewolf*. The coverage includes interviews with director Terence Fisher and make-up artist Ray Ashton, together with extracts from press books, reproductions of Ray Ashton's pre-production sketches, plus every stills, posters, etc. A great deal of work has gone into this study and the result is more than worthwhile.

The remaining pages include an interview with Orin Argento and an article on Paul Naschy.

The only sad part about this magazine is that it is the last of the series but, hopefully, Jan's plans for a new, more general, fantasy film 'zine will come to fruition and the end product, *Phantom*, will be of the same excellent quality. Published by Jan Van Geenechten, 276 pages, £2.75—import.

MECHANISMO by Harry Harrison

Since *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters* there has been an upswing in interest in the technical side of science fiction: *Specscreed 2000* to *2100 AD* is one product of this increased interest. *Mechanismo* is



another.

With his book Harry Harrison tends to take a more mature look at the subject but possibly because of this *Mechanismo* is not a wholly satisfying read. Many of the paintings and illustrations also leave a lot to be desired though, overall, it is not the art that is the book's weakness. As with *Specscreed* many of the illustrations have seen print before but there are a number of originals including Brian Lewis's cut-away drawings showing the interiors of light sabers, blasters, and robots.

Published by Pierrot Books, 120 pages, £4.95.



SABRE by Don McGregor and Paul Gulacy

At first glance *Sabre* is nothing more than an over-priced, magazine-sized comic book but nothing that McGregor or Gulacy become involved in could be that simple. Both names will mean something to long-term readers of Marvel comics but for newcomers and others, Don McGregor was the writer on such acclaimed series as *Killraven* and *Jungle Action* whilst Paul Gulacy's artwork was featured in the highly-regarded *Master of Kung Fu* amongst others.

Although McGregor's work has won much praise from comic fans, his major fault lies in his inability to accept the fact that he is writing comics and that it is the picture that should tell the story: all his strips suffered from overwordiness and this is a "fault" he has brought with him to *Sabre*.

Sabre, subtitled *Slow Pace of as*

Endangered Species, is set in the future when civilisation is in a state of decay and, whilst the story has been told well, Paul Gulacy's excellent artwork tends to draw your attention away from the acres of wordage and on to the next illustration. *Sabre* is a very attractive production, but worth £3.75?

Published by Ego, USA, 40 pages, £3.75—import.



COMA by Robin Cook

This makes compelling reading: by the time you reach the end of the first chapter you will be hooked through to the end—but be warned, if hospitals make you nervous already you will regret picking it up. Robin Cook has written a masterpiece of suspense which is only slightly flawed by a weak ending.

Published by Pen Books, 336 pages, 80p.



THE INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE FICTION YEARBOOK

edited by Colin Lester

If you are interested enough in science fiction to become more involved, then this latest offering from Pierrot will be of use. Its pages contain information on,

amongst other things. Conventions, Publishers, Agents, Authors, and the list of contents seems endless.

A lot of work has gone into the Yearbook, however it is only to be expected that, with a work of this scope, mistakes and omissions will occur. Hopefully they will be corrected in next year's edition. This book is obviously intended for reference rather than for "light reading" but the layout of the information does make it heavy going.

Published by Pinnat Books. 400 pages. £2.95.



FROM THE LAND BEYOND BEYOND

by Jeff Revis

The prolific Mr Revis has written a book that will appeal to lovers of stop-motion animation everywhere. From the *Lead Beyond Beyond* covers the films of Willie O'Brien and Ray Harryhausen in depth with King Kong and each of Harryhausen's major films having chapters of their own. The text is illustrated with over 200 stills and includes full cast and credits.

The final chapter concerns itself with others involved in this field: many would agree that animators such as Jim Gasforth do not yet mean as much as Ray Harryhausen to most fantasy film fans and it would have been much better to have left this book belonging to O'Brien and Harryhausen—one chapter does not do the others justice.

Published by Berkley Windward. 200 pages. \$5.95—import.



SPACECRAFT 2000 TO 2100 AD

by Stewart Cowley

Spacecraft is an unusual publication. Sub-titled *A Terro Trade Authority*

Headbook this hardback book takes various full colour paintings by well-known science fiction artists and provides a history and technical specification for the craft depicted. The author has obviously put a lot of thought into the basic idea and he has been rewarded with an interesting and enjoyable book. The major drawback is that many (if not all) of the paintings included in *Spacecraft* have seen publication previously, mainly as book covers. This does not spoil the book in any way but original art would have been better.

Published by The Hensyn Group. 100 pages. £2.85.



MUDD'S ANGELS by J.A. Lawrence. Finally, with *Mudd's Angels*, all the live-action *Star Trek* episodes are available in book form. Included this time are adaptations of *Mudd's Women* and *I, Mudd* together with a brand new story featuring Harry Mudd and titled *The Business, As Usual, During Absences*.

There is little that can be said about the two television based stories—they are written well enough—but the new material does leave something to be desired. It reads as though Mr Lawrence is somewhat bemused by the whole *Star Trek* phenomena: it is not a bad science fiction story but neither does it come across as good *Star Trek*—apart from which, a "villain" like Harry Mudd was worthy of a much better fate. Published by Corgi Books. 182 pages. 75p.

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

Don Lawrence was the original artist on the *Trigan Empire* strip when it first appeared in the old British weekly comic *Reefer* and later *Look and Learn*. His painstaking work made this a much talked about strip—each frame could almost have been a full colour oil painting.

Basically, *The Trigan Empire* is the story of the rise of a civilisation on a far off planet. Lawrence incorporated many different ideas into the strip so that "flying saucers" and galley ships could be seen side by side and yet,



because of his careful handling, the many different themes did not seem too incongruous.

Handy should be praised for their efforts in making *The Trigan Empire* available once more but, unfortunately, insufficient care has been taken with the project. The book includes seven different stories from the long-running series but they have not been reprinted in chronological order: luckily someone had the sense to print the earliest episodes first but some of the subsequent stories come from a much later period after Don Lawrence had abandoned the strip. Although this must be considered a major fault by any completist, it does not detract from the overall excellence of the art—if you have not seen this strip and are interested in comic art side of it, then you won't be disappointed with this book.

Published by The Hensyn Group. 152 pages. £2.95.



ROBOTS: FACT, FICTION AND PREDICTION

by Jessie Reichart

Robots describes the development of artificial man from the very early conception up to date. Although tending to be factual, the treatment is far from dry; the author has obviously researched the subject well and has covered all the myriad aspects of his theme in an interesting and informative manner. It is surprising how much this field encompasses and how far science has progressed: some of the 230 illustrations used are eye-openers. There are many people fascinated by robots and

this book is an ideal layman's guide to the subject.

Published by Thames and Hudson. 168 pages. £2.95.



SUPERHEROES edited by Michel Parry. Michel Parry has gathered together 13 stories of superheroes. Although the authors' names include Black, Spider and Niven, the prime result of the book is to prove that superheroes are fine in comics, bearable on films, but just do not work in novel form.

Published by Sphere Books. 268 pages. 85p.



THE FACTS ABOUT A FEATURE FILM

by Marjorie Bilbow

Marjorie Bilbow has written a very good introduction to the world of the cinema which is well illustrated both in black and white and colour with many behind-the-scenes photographs.

Using as her study piece Hammer's *To the Devil . . . A Daughter* she takes the newcomer, in very simple stages, through the business of producing a film from pre-production to final release. With all the film world's technical terminology and titles explained in very basic terms, this is an ideal hardback book for a youngster just becoming interested in movies. Published by G. Whizzard. 56 pages. £2.50.

Maya Merchandising

The following is a list of some of the fantasy film magazines and books available from us. For our full catalogue send a large self-addressed envelope. All prices include postage—overseas customers please note that orders will be sent by surface mail. Please make cheques/postal orders payable to MAYA MERCHANDISING and send to us at 52 Roydene Road, Plumstead, London SE18 10A.

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An Album of Great Science Fiction Movies (Manchell) Nearly 100 stills, 11½ x 8½". 86 pages £3.50

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Making of Kubrick's 2001 (Agel) The film from conception to completion. 368 pages (96 pages photos) £1.70

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Making of Star Trek (Whitfield & Roddenberry) How Star Trek was conceived, written, sold and produced. Over 100 stills, 416 pages £1.00

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No. 15: This Island Earth, Twilight Zone Episode Guide 85p

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No. 17: TV preview issue, McQueen interview plus McQueen full colour fold out poster 95p

Science Fantasy Film Classics (U.S.A.) Plenty of colour throughout: 72 pages includes giant 22 x 32" full colour poster: No. 2: Star Trek, Laser Blast, This Island Earth £1.45

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Just Imagine (U.K.) The journal of film and television special effects: No. 5: Giant size tabloid, 16 pages 80p

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Spacecraft 2000 to 2100 A.D. (Cowley) A "Taran Trade Authority Handbook". Fully illustrated, with technical data and histories. Full colour throughout; 12 x 9½". (Hard cover) 96 pages £3.50

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Robots: Fact, Fiction + Prediction (Reichardt) 11 x 8". 168 pages. 280 illustrations (12 in colour) £3.30

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Why not visit our new shop at 54 Sellegrove Road, Welling, Kent, which stocks our full range of fantasy film related material plus science fiction, horror and fantasy novels and American comics.

Battlestar GALACTICA™

By way of a special preview to the much-publicised *Battlestar Galactica*, we present a pictorial feature revealing the ingenuity of the special effects. The "pilot" will be shown in this country as a theatrical release and will then become a tv series debuting in the summer of 1979.



Above: a Cylon fights in a destructive mood, looking somewhat similar in design to George Pal's Martian war machines.



The Ovioms, a race of insect-like aliens, lull the fleeing humans into a state of false security, actually preparing them for death.



Fanatically intent on destroying all humans, the dreaded Cylons appear as steel-clad, robotic dealers of destruction.

Half man, half machine, a squad of Cylon warriors display their military might.



Above: a superb example of the visual ingenuity that the film displays courtesy of that highly talented effects technician, John Dykstra.



The exciting climax to the nap laid by the Cylons and the Ovions.

This strange alien "teddy bear" is the mascot of the Battlestar crew.



The first tv space fantasy of epic proportions, *Battlestar Galactica*. The star of the show (above) is the gigantic space craft containing the last of the human race.



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SUPERMAN - The Movie. See page 4 inside.



Starburst # 5 (1978)

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